SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 512. FOR WEEK ENDING OCTOBER 22ND, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

Stomach Disorders.

MR. ROBERT SPROT, of 51 Orchard Street, Galston, Ayrshire, writes on June 10th, 1898:

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SHORT STORIES

No. 512. ONE PENNY.

For the Week Ending
October 22nd, 1898.

THOSE WHO FOUGHT AT OMDURMAN.

No. 4.—Baggara Horseman.

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An Arab Sweetheart

I REALLY do not think that a man who has seen a little fighting was ever so much bothered to tell all he knew about that little as I have been of late. It was my luck to be in some of the earlier fighting in the Soudan in the eighties, and the way I have been harassed for stories of gallant deeds performed by myself, would have tempted many a less truthful man to become a second Baron Munchausen.

I have made up my mind to say no more about my own doings, so I cannot gratify you this time; but as you are so pressing I will tell you what someone else did, if that will do. It will? Very good; here you are, and you may take my word for it that it's true, although—but you know the old saying about truth and fiction.

Towards the end of 1883, Colonel Hicks, or Hicks Pasha, was going strong against the Mahdi with a force of Egyptian troops and one or two British officers. After some successful fighting, Hicks reached Duem on his way to Kordofan.

About five weeks later, the force was decoyed into ambush at El-Obeid and annihilated. My story concerns a gallant attempt to warn Hicks Pasha.

At the very time that the force was moving from the Nile, an inkling of the plot came to Dick Farrar, a young Englishman of barely twenty, who was with the Arabs at a point several miles from Duem.

Dick was the son of a man who had spent many years of his life in wandering among these and certain Asiatic peoples, studying their languages and customs. On his last journey, Dick being then fifteen and motherless, Professor Farrar decided that his son should accompany him.

Less than a year later, Farrar died in the Soudan, and Dick was kept by the people, and became almost one of them.

When the Mahdist revolt broke out, Dick Farrar did not trouble himself about it; he was happy and contented, he knew but little about it, and he cared still less.

As time wore on, he fancied that his movements were watched, and then, suddenly, there came to him the

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intelligence that aroused him to take an active part in the historical events of the period.

He was seated on a stone outside a small structure that served as a dwelling for the old man and woman with whom he lived, when he heard a voice behind him:

"Dick, do you still love your own people?"

Farrar started as the sweet tones struck his ear, and sprang up to greet the new-comer.

"Zelfa! I did not know that you were so near," he exclaimed, as he took her by both hands and gazed tenderly into her eyes, which dropped before his admiring look. "But why do you ask me that question?"

"Let us walk farther away and talk in the tongue which you have taught me," she replied in fairly good English. "We shall not be heard."

Wondering somewhat at her manner, Dick walked quietly by her side into the open. It was no new thing for those two to be seen together, and they both knew it, although they were scarcely conscious of the significance of the fact to others.

When they had gone beyond the chance of being overheard, Zelfa spoke.

"You have told me that you lived among a race of people who are brave and good, Dick," she said. "I know that your father was like that—and you——"

She paused in pretty confusion, while Dick whispered words that made her blush beneath her dark skin.

"My people are brave and good also," she went on in troubled tones, "and they are fighting to conquer this land for the great Mahdi. Oh, Dick, I am in trouble! I know not what to do!"

"Dear Zelfa, tell me all," exclaimed Farrar in perplexity. "What is this trouble that is making you so sad? What mean these strange words?"

"My people have already been defeated by the Egyptians led by men from your country. One of those Egyptian armies has reached Duem, and our spies tell us that the soldiers will march to kill the Mahdi beyond El-Obeid. Our people have planned that the army shall be deceived and led into a defile at El-Obeid and every man killed, including your brave countrymen."

"They do, eh?" muttered Dick, speaking more to himself than to the lovely girl by his side. He had not cared much which way the conflict went, but now he was aroused. All is fair in war, perhaps, but the thought that British officers were to be led into ambush and struck down without a fair chance of selling their lives dearly, set his blood throbbing in his veins.

"You have told me," continued Zelfa, "that you lived with an uncle named White, whose son, who was older than you, helped you. He was going to be a soldier. I have heard that one of the Englishmen with this army is a young man of that name."

"What, Tommy here, and going to be led into a trap! Not if I know it! Anyhow, not without my trying to save him! Zelfa," turning again eagerly to her, "I must save them; how can I do it? Can you help me?"

"That is my trouble," returned Zelfa, wringing her hands. "If I help you to save them, I am betraying my own race, and yet if I leave your cousin to die without warning, I am false to you—my love!"

For the first time Dick realised that the girl was passionately in love with him, and that he returned her affection. Unconsciously they had drifted from friendship into love, and the awakening had come to them, as to so many others, through trial and the conflict of love and duty. Unmindful of everything, Dick clasped Zelfa in his arms and kissed her.

But the thought of impending events soon came back to them and aroused them from their ecstasy.

"Something must be done to save them," said Dick as he released her from his embrace. "No, you will not be acting falsely to your people by helping me to warn mine, Zelfa. I shall be saving mine from butchery, so that the two armies may fight it out fairly; and if the Mahdi's troops see that the Egyptians are on their guard, they will prepare for a good battle. No, there is nothing wrong in it, Zelfa. And then," he continued tenderly, "my people will be yours also one day, because I shall take you away with me to live in England. Do you understand?"

With these and other arguments—perfectly sincere, though not quite logical—Dick persuaded his Arab sweetheart to complete her work by assisting him to warn the army under Hicks of the danger that menaced it. They conversed earnestly together, and finally evolved a plan which Dick was to carry out that night.

Just as they were about to retrace their steps to the village, a sudden thought occurred to Farrar that made him stop and turn hot and cold.

"Zelfa, if I do this, what will become of you? They will be certain that you have helped me and——"

He stopped in dread.

"I have thought of that," returned Zelfa quietly. "I know how to act, and when you are gone and danger is past, I will follow you in some way and meet you at Duem or another place. I shall find you. My love will guide me," she concluded simply.

"You must come with me," he began impetuously, but he stopped as he remembered that that was practically impossible.

Zelfa smiled, somewhat sadly, and they returned to the village without exchanging another word.

That night when Dick thought that the people about him were at rest, he stole out and made his way towards a boulder in the desert beyond.

Hidden within a recess there, he would find a camel which the loving Zelfa would have led thither ready for his ride to Duem on the Nile.

Stealthily he walked across the intervening space, keeping his rifle hidden as much as possible by holding it vertically and close to his body.

He had dressed himself exactly like the Arabs, having discarded the half-European, half-Arab costume he always wore.

His heart beat more quickly than usual, but he was not excited to any degree at this juncture, for he felt that he was scarcely likely to be stopped or challenged. The trouble would come when he was nearer the Nile, according to Zelfa's information.

The moon had not risen, and Dick hoped to get some distance away before it did. He reached the boulder and walked with a light step round it. He had just turned it, and sighted the ship of the desert, when a click caught his ear. He threw himself on his knees instinctively, and the next instant there was a report and the whizz of a bullet over his head.

Discovered! There must be no hesitation now; his own life was at stake. He sprang to his feet and rushed at the figure he saw in the dim light.

There was a short wrestling bout between them. Dick was a strong fellow, and he had not forgotten what he had learnt at school. The Arab went down with a thud and Dick did what he could not help calling a cowardly action—he struck the fallen man on the head with his rifle and stunned him.

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There was no time to be lost. The whole force of the men would be upon him now. Already he heard the noise. He mounted the camel, and turning the creature's head in the direction of Duem, lashed it with the end of the long rawhide halter. The camel pitched and rolled like a veritable ship on the ocean, but it was not the first occasion on which Dick had ridden a camel and he took no heed of that.

The chief thing for him was that he had got a good start, and he felt no doubt that Zelfa had made the best selection.

Bullets now whizzed near him at intervals, and he could see that he was being pursued. At first the thought of firing back at them flashed across his mind; but he dismissed the notion at once. What chance would he have of hitting any of them, from the back of a jolting camel? Moreover, he was reluctant to fire at those who had been kind to him.

Then for a short space the firing ceased, and nothing was to be heard save the pad, pad of the hoofs on the sand

From an occasional glance backwards Farrar ascertained that the pursuers were not gaining, and he hoped that they would drop off and let him go; but the danger from stray bodies of dervishes was all the greater.

Several miles were covered and his pursuers were out-distanced. But now the moon had risen and he was a conspicuous object. He allowed his mount to slacken into an ordinary trotting pace. Another two or three miles were covered without incident, and then he reached a spot which he deemed to be a fairly safe place to rest for an hour or two.

He considered that he was now safe from pursuit by his old friends, and it was certainly advisable to give his beast a rest.

He fully expected to encounter some dervishes during the remainder of his journey, and although he relied upon his knowledge of the language and customs of the people, aided by his tact, to pull him through, he might have to depend upon the fleetness of his camel.

So he dismounted, and, hidden by one of the natural corrugations of the desert, passed the remaining hours of night in watchful repose.

In the early morning he resumed his journey. He went on steadily; it might arouse suspicion if he were seen racing over the desert, and, moreover, it would be better to reserve his camel's strength for emergencies.

He acted wisely. He had not been half an hour on his journey when he came in sight of a small body of dervishes. He decided to approach them without altering his gait; it would be better to do that than to attempt to escape them by making a detour and trusting to his camel to out-distance them—for he knew that they would come after him when they saw him going off in another direction, however slowly he might jog along.

Dick's heart seemed to thump against his ribs as he drew near to the dervishes. Suppose among that group there was one who knew him? In that case suspicion would probably be aroused. Those who knew him were, of course, aware that he was a European and they might well conclude, as he was now not many miles from Duem, that he was on his way to the Egyptian camp for some purpose inimical to the Mahdi's cause.

When he came up to them, Dick saluted them and eagerly scanned all the faces he could see. He could recognise none of them, and fervently hoped that he had fallen in with strangers.

He began the conversation by boldly asking them whither they were bound, and whether they had fallen in with any of the enemy. They replied that they were endeavouring, with other small bodies, to harass the Egyptions and hinder their march. Then they began to question him.

Farrar replied with assumed fervour that he too, was on the watch to have a shot at any venturesome Egyptian soldier or English officer—especially the latter—who might stray from the camp. The leader, a man about forty, shook his head warningly.

"You are over-bold," he said. "Our warriors must be brave, but caution must not be absent or our bravery is of little worth. These men rarely come out in ones or twos, but in small bodies to find out our position. Alone you can do nothing; come with us."

Dick bowed humbly, but repeated that he wished to get as near to the camp as he could; adding that he believed he could attain that object better by himself as he would not be so conspicuous as a troop of thirty.

After a little more talk, in a vain endeavour to dissuade him from his reckless purpose, they allowed him to pass on, with exhortations and good wishes. As he had no spear they gave him one; at close quarters—if it came to that—he would find it valuable.

Dick ambled away with a sigh of relief. Safe so far; if he could deceive others in the same way!

Another hour passed. The sun was rising and Dick began to hope that he was not far from Duem. It was quite possible that he might fall in with some reconnoitring party from the camp, in which case his mission would be accomplished far more easily than he had dared to hope. His spirits rose; he began to whistle a tune he had sung at school, and his mind wandered once again to Zelfa.

He had been troubled about her. How had she fared at the hands of her people? Who had betrayed them? It was not Ahmed, the young Arab whose suit had been rejected, for he was away. And what had Zelfa done to escape the punishment that would surely be meted out to her for her complicity in the plot? He had worried over this while he himself had been in danger, but now that success seemed within his grasp, he was disposed to regard this, also, in less sombre colours. She would have found a way of escape, he felt confident of that now.

How, and when, would they meet again? When he had warned Hicks he would return and seek the brave and devoted girl; that was settled in his mind. He was in the midst of plans for seeking her, when he heard his name called. Quite forgetting, in the half-dreamy state into which he had lapsed, where he was, he looked up and answered.

Then he looked in the direction of the voice and saw—Ahmed!

"You have ventured a long way, my friend," cried Ahmed as he pulled up his camel at a distance of three or four yards. There was something in his voice that made Dick watch him carefully.

"True," replied Farrar, who had also pulled up. "But what of that?"

"Why do you leave us—and the beautiful Zelfa—to rejoin those who may be able to send you back to your own country? Are not Zelfa's charms, even, enough to keep you with us?"

"How dare you talk of her in that way?" cried Dick in a rage. "What right have you to address such questions to me? Stand aside and let me pass!"

Touching his camel, Dick made an attempt to pass

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Ahmed, but the latter quickly moved to the left and intercepted him again.

Dick saw now that a fight was inevitable; without more ado he gripped his spear and rode straight at Ahmed.

By a dexterous movement of his camel, Ahmed avoided the onslaught and made a thrust that Dick parried.

It was a singular duel. Both were young and active, both knew how to handle the camel and the spear. But Ahmed was the more skilful of the two, and Dick knew that he must be wary.

Again and again they wheeled and thrust at each other, but without any advantage on either side. Not until five minutes had passed was the fight attended with the least success; then Ahmed thrust his spear through Dick's shoulder and slipped off his camel to avoid the return lunge.

Quick as thought, despite the pain of the wound, Farrar struck Ahmed's mount a severe blow, making the creature cry with pain and rush off, and at the same time urged his own camel forward to escape the attack which he felt that his enemy would make with a view to maiming the beast.

This manœuvre had outwitted Ahmed, who—without his steed and armed with only his spear—was at the mercy of his antagonist armed with a rifle. That rifle was now levelled at his head.

"You have won," said Ahmed, calmly throwing down his spear and awaiting the death that seemed inevitable.

But Dick felt that he could not kill his adversary in cold blood, for the heat of the combat was over. He thought of "winging" him, so that he could not do any mischief, but the idea of a man lying wounded on the sand during the heat of the day was too terrible. He must try some other way.

"Will you promise me to turn back and go homewards if I spare your life?" he asked. "Will you swear it by the beard of the Prophet?"

Ahmed was silent. He revolved the chances swiftly in his mind. Then he swore an oath that Dick felt convinced that he would not break.

"You may go," said Dick, lowering his rifle a little. And without a word Ahmed faced about and strode away.

Dick now urged his camel forward towards Duem at a quicker pace. His wound now pained him terribly, and he felt that he was growing weak through loss of blood. He tried to staunch the wound by binding it up roughly, but he felt that he must go forward with all speed.

On, on, he raced. If he dismounted and rested, he could do no more and he might faint by the way. It was a race against physical infirmity, and he must win—he must win, for so much depended upon it.

On—on! He felt himself getting weaker and his head sinking on his breast. Half unconsciously he struck the camel with the end of the halter. Then he heard, as though in the distance, the report of a rifle. His camel fell forward, and he was thrown over the creature's head and fell with a thud to the ground.

* * * * *

When Dick Farrar came to his senses, he found himself on a rough bed, being tended by an Irish doctor and an Arab woman.

He learnt to his horror that he had been suffering from an attack of brain fever, and that this was his first lucid interval since he had been picked up in the desert some little distance from Duem, after he had been shot at by some dervishes.

He had raved a great deal about the destruction of the Egyptian army that had left Duem shortly before he had been found, and about "Zelfa" and other things.

How long had he been ill and where was he?

"A fortnight," was the answer to his first question.

"Near Berber," was the reply to the second inquiry.

Dick groaned in agony and tried to make them understand the position; but they soothed him and said he must be quiet and that he was showing signs of another attack of delirium.

And so it came to pass that Dick Farrar's attempt to save Hicks resulted in failure.

They were surprised that he spoke English and were ready to believe that he had lived in the Soudan; but when he endeavoured to make them believe the rest of his story they shook their heads warningly, or did their best to sooth him by pretending to believe him and carry out his desires. They did not believe him till the news of the disaster arrived.

It would serve no useful purpose to dwell upon Dick's sufferings, mental and physical.

He was hurried back to Egypt with others, and it was quite three months before he was about again.

Did he ever meet Zelfa again? Yes. It was fourteen months afterwards, when Dick was taking part in the memorable expedition to Khartoum—which he did as one of the series of efforts to find her—that he came face to face with her just after the battle of Abu Klea. She, too, had tried to find him, and had kept near the Mahdi's troops—occupied in tending the wounded—because she thought that he might be with the gallant little band.

But they came together too late; he found her wounded and dying.

The meeting was one of joy at seeing each other once more, and finding that they had been faithful to one another. And it was one of sorrow at parting for ever.

Zelfa died in his arms with a smile of content. She had escaped punishment by leaving her people and tramping about in search of him.

Dick Farrar mourned long for his Arab sweetheart, and it was thought that he would never marry. But constant intercourse with the women of his own race had its effect, and in the summer of 1890, when he was nearing his twenth-seventh birthday, he led a pretty English girl to the altar.

George Day.

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THE MARKED CARDS.

THEY had been many days over the sea, the young man and the girl. He had forgotten whether this were the Pacific or the sea that sweeps the shore of Elysium.

Now, on the twenty-fifth day, they were on deck, and talking som what in this way:

"You must walk with me," she called from her chair.

"It's a delightful punishment."

"Thanks; I believe that's a compliment."

"Truth's a compliment, eh?" he said, miling.

"The best compliments, I suppose, are those that pretend to be truths, but are not."

"I am afraid this is getting rather too fast for me," he said. "Wait until I think about it."

"To carry out what you have begun, you should say to me, 'I can't think about it, for I have to think about you.'"

"Is it necessary to say that?" he said, looking down at the girl. "How beautiful you are!"

By the rules of conventional conversation it was an utterly inane remark, and the girl's laughter rolled out, full and delightful, but her voice was low.

"I am glad you think so."

A deeper red tinged his bronzed cheeks as he realised his temerity.

"You know I do," he said.

"Oh, do I? Our acquaintance is not of very long standing. A few days will see the end of our voyage."

He drew a long breath, and his voice was earnest. To land meant work, and to see her no more.

Two elderly persons were watching the two young people.

"What a remarkable girl Nellie Wolverton is!" one was saying.

"She's certainly carrying on a remarkable flirtation with that young man. Who is he?" said the other, with the severity of position gained by effort.

"Some sort of engineer in the employ of the Winfield company. Mary Winfield introduced him to Nellie."

"That girl would flirt with anybody. She seems to find all men infinitely amusing. Isn't she handsome? Now, you would suppose she was somebody or other. But the Wolvertons—oh, you know!" quoth the other lady.

"Her mother was one of the most pushing women I ever knew," assented her companion.

"Of the dead *nihil nisi bonum*," said the imposing one. "She was an extraordinarily ambitious woman. With pluck and a fortune, and a daughter like that, an ambitious woman can do anything in Australia. The Wolverton money is said to be incalculable now. Oh, dear, how many men have been after that girl! She flirts and laughs with them all, just as she does with that young man."

Mary Winfield was watching the two with much the same thoughts. This poor young man didn't understand sophisticated young women; it was abominable of Nellie Wolverton; she was sorry she had introduced them; she might have known that Nellie would play with any man as she would with a cat or a dog. Oh, dear, this Melville was so out of it; so busy and capable, and such an efficient servant of the Winfield company. But Nellie was Nellie, and Mary ought to have known better.

If Nellie were Nellie, she was proving it with a vengeance. She was making Melville tell her of himself, and she was giving him nothing of herself in return. They were seated now, looking out at the frothing white and green in the ship's wake. She was glancing at him again and again with mildly interested eyes. He was forgetting himself, and was telling how his father had left him only money enough for school and college, which he had increased by some tutoring; of how he had worked and won a position in a machine shop of the Winfield company; of how he had progressed farther, and now was near the head of his department, and had been sent to London on an important mission, and——

A young man came lightly across the deck, and bowed and exchanged some remarks with Miss Wolverton, and nodded at Melville with a "who-the-dickens-are-you" air and passed on after a moment. Melville's confidences, suddenly chilled. This youngster represented what he never had known. The girl by his side understood.

"Don't mind Bertie; he's just Bertie."

"Oh, you know," Melville began, "I'm so out of that set."

"Of that particular set you mean," she said graciously, as if she would imply politely that there were many others which he doubtless frequented. "The men are very stupid in it. It's all very stupid. It's just sport and gossip. For my part, give me men that do things."

"I think," said the young-man-making-his-way, "that I prefer other men to do things, and leave them to me already done. Now my father——"

He paused, wondering whether he had better tell her, and then it seemed to him, now that he remembered it, that this put him on a sort of equality with Miss Wolverton, as though the inequality that stood between them was suddenly swept away by the thought of this story. But had he a right to tell her? No, she wouldn't, couldn't know; that was so long ago and forgotten.

"And your father? Go on—I am interested."

"He might have had the things, the money, to have put me in your friend Bertie's position, if luck had been his way, and if he hadn't been cheated——"

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"I never can think of you as a man like Bertie," Miss Wolverton said decisively, with that calm confidence in her eyes; the eyes may have been rather more expressive because this was the last day of all, and he would slip out of her life so soon. She was fair to look upon, clever, accomplished, charming; this fence of the sexes was her delight; she could no more avoid it than she could breathing. Our unsophisticated young man failed to understand her. Later, common sense was to reach out from the grim, matter-of-fact depths of his nature, and grasp his sentimentality until it hurt him.

"Oh it's a little story of what might have been years ago in Damp Flats in Queensland. My father was out there after gold, and he fell in with a man with whom he entered into partnership in a general store. Sometimes in exchange for goods, they took claims. At first they made a lot of money, and then they lost nearly every penny in trying to develop a claim that failed.

"Well, each blamed the other, and they decided to separate. They could decide on no other way than to cut the cards. So they sat down one day and cut, and some things fell to my father, and some to his partner. And the papers were drawn up, and the division made.

"A week after that a claim which had gone to my father's partner began to develop. It proved a find: my father's partner made the beginning of a great fortune that way."

"Well?" said the girl.

"Now, the shanty that served for the store had fallen to my father, not the stock, which went to pay the firm's debts. Three weeks after this my father sat talking with a mining expert, who spoke of the big find on my father's former partner's lucky claim; and he stated boastfully, to show his value as an expert probably that he had told my father's partner—we will call him Smith—that the claim was extremely valuable.

"This set my father thinking; Smith had believed the claim to be valuable. But my father could but acknowledge that the man had given him a chance, even if he had dishonestly hidden his notion of the claim. That day my father happened to be in the abandoned store. On the table were the two packs of dirty cards, just as they had been left the day of the division. They had cut in the bare inner room, which hadn't been disturbed since. My father picked up these instruments of his bad luck, and he saw that the pack Smith had used had been marked."

"How awful!" the listener said. "And you might have had the money, if it hadn't been——"

"If it hadn't been for Smith's dishonesty, yes, Miss Wolverton. But to return to the story, my father went to Smith, whom he accused, but Smith looked him in the face and laughed. 'You are crazy, man. And you haven't any proof. Who'd believe you?'"

"Was that the end of it?" the girl asked gently.

"No, not the end of it. My father could prove nothing, indeed. His affairs went from bad to worse. He left Queensland penniless. Later on, he accumulated the little money he was able to leave me. But it was always a hard struggle for him and my mother, who died shortly after I was born."

"And Smith? that's not the name."

Melville hesitated.

"No, that's not the name. It's a well-known name, but we will let it remain Smith. Everything Smith touched became money; he was accused of dishonesty many times in the course of his career, but nothing ever was proven; he succeeded, and is to-day one of the powerful men in Victoria."

They were silent, the girl grave.

"And that's the reason you think you are not in the class of Bertie Townley. Well, I don't want you to be in that class."

"If you would care that much!" said he, half lightly, half earnestly.

"Oh, I like you," she said cheerily, as she might have said she liked a fox-terrier.

"And the man's dishonesty was really your blessing; it made you do things."

He smiled.

"I must be going below. Oh, I have been so much interested!"

And she went away brightly smiling, and he felt, suddenly, just the least like a fool. This feeling was increased when he found in the bustle of landing that she had only a cool shake of the hand and a distant "So glad to have met you," and no acknowledgment of the fact that he had asked to call, which she had plainly evaded. He felt revengeful and a bit of an anarchist.

And the next morning when he was reporting to Mr. Winfield his success in London, and being complimented by the company's head, his success seemed cheap; he had a picture before him of a bright, high-bred looking, exquisitely-dressed young woman, surrounded by flippantly gay persons whose world was not his, and never could be; for when one is making his way ploddingly, with no particular capital, he can't reasonably expect that way to be made before he may be grey and all the desire for pleasure, life's good things, quite gone.

It may be supposed that Miss Wolverton put the young man of the voyage out of her mind. Perhaps she had some thoughts of him or else she never would have repeated the story he had told her at a dinner where her father was, most unusually, her escort. At a dinner one owes it as a duty to do his part. Nellie did not care to be lacking, and wanted her story to be as spirited as anyone else's. For she waged a little strife to make the world she knew hold her clever. Now she couldn't, try as she would, think of another story than the one Melville had told her.

"Mary Winfield introduced me to a very entertaining man on the boat, a man who does things, you know——"

"What does he do, horses or yachts?" said Bertie Townley. "Oh, I say, Nellie, you don't mean that serious-faced chap you were mooning about with so much?"

"The very man," Miss Wolverton said, without changing colour.

And she told Melville's story.

"How extraordinary!" gasped Mrs. Pemberton. "You do meet such strange people at sea."

"Business methods are oftentimes dishonest," said a legal luminary pompously. "Yet——"

"Your story isn't funny enough," criticised Bertie Townley.

Samuel Wolverton, I should say Sam, the great Sam, held his nose in his port. He's a thin, sharp-featured, silent man, and, looking at him, one always wonders how he succeeded in possessing such a daughter.

Driving home, he said to Nellie:

"If I were you I don't think I'd try to tell stories at dinner."

"Why, papa?"

"It's undignified."

"Do you think so?" she said petulantly. She usually had him well in hand.

"What did you say that man's name is?" he asked after a moment.

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"Frank Melville."

Suddenly she turned.

"Papa, you were in Queensland?"

"Yes; what of it?"

"Did you ever hear a story like that?"

"I have heard a lot of stories; the diggings are full of them. As for your acquaintance, he was probably yarning."

"No, no, he wasn't."

"What makes you think that?"

"He isn't that kind of man."

"Nellie, I think that you can take care of yourself, but I don't believe you can judge men."

"Oh, trust me for that," she said airily; and at the moment she was indeed trying to judge no less a person than her father. She had thought that she understood him. Had she? He was fond of her; he denied her nothing, and she loved him. But—there were depths she could not fathom; and she knew no more of his real life, even less, than an outsider.

But now a sudden fear possessed her. She rushed upstairs to a little room which she used for her writing-table and her books, and eagerly she looked for a paper in a certain English magazine: "Modern Millionaires. No. X, Samuel Wolverton." Had she been mistaken? And then she read:

"The beginning of this extraordinary fortune was in '66, in the Damp Flat Mines of Queensland. Melville and Wolverton were storekeepers who exchanged a supposedly bad debt for the now-famed Bulfinch Mine. Wolverton bought out his partner."

For a minute the room seemed to swim.

"Oh, if mamma were only here!" the girl said moaningly. "It's true—true. This is all his, and not mine, every penny of it. And he knew when he told me; he knew."

And she stole down to her father.

She went towards him, the magazine in hand, and held it before him.

Wolverton started. He had never seen her like this; and her pallor frightened him. And then he saw to what she pointed.

"Was the story he told me true?"

"What if it were?"

"What if it were?" she said mockingly. "You can't understand, 'what if it were.'"

But the father said quietly, with a mastery of himself:

"If it were true, Melville couldn't have succeeded. He hadn't it in him. He would have failed at anything. I cut loose from him."

"But you haven't told me whether the story is true."

"I won't acknowledge nor deny it," he said at last. "What of it? You ought not to find fault. My money has made you a position as fine as any girl's."

"Good-night," said the girl.

At the door he called to her:

"Nellie, you haven't kissed me good-night."

"I can't—to-night."

And she was gone.

"A woman can't understand business. She'll get over it."

But he failed to sleep well that night.

She was not at breakfast. He went to her room. She was sleeping with a look that frightened him. On his way to his office he stopped at his doctor's.

"I wish you would see my daughter. I am worried about her."

He kept himself busied until about three o'clock, and then drove through the park, a tired-faced man people pointed out.

As he entered the house he heard Nellie's voice. He paused in the hall and listened.

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Melville," she was saying.

"I had your note, and came here promptly, I think."

"Yes, promptly."

"I have passed you several times since we landed at Melbourne, but I don't believe you saw me," Melville said rather bitterly.

He was thinking how charming she appeared here in her own house.

He was blaming himself for all that he had thought of her, when her world, of which he had that brief glimpse had been shut out.

"I sent for you," Nellie went on, "to ask you why you told me that story when—when you knew that your father's partner then—was—my father."

The listener started, and moved towards the door, and drew back.

At last he heard:

"Miss Wolverton—yes, it was so, it is so, and I was a coward to tell you."

"I am glad you told me," Nellie said humbly, for this was no longer the proud Miss Wolverton, she wondered at herself, tears were in her eyes, and self-control was far away.

"I don't know what made me tell you, and yet I do know. I have lied; I do know now. You seemed so far out of my reach, and I wanted you to be in my reach. Do you understand?"

"I don't know that I understand," the girl said. "I can't seem to understand."

"And—oh, you are crying. I have hurt you. I wouldn't hurt you for the world."

"Don't," she said, "please don't."

But he was saying:

"I know the reason now. It was—don't you see—didn't you see?"

After a moment the listener heard Nellie's voice.

"It's best so. If you do, it rights itself. And—I see it clearly. I know now why I didn't want you to be of Bertie Townley's class. You are a man who does things—and will—a man for a woman to be proud of, and—yes—it's all clear to me—I thought I was just flirting with you. But since that night I know it was more."

Presently the *portière* was pushed aside.

Wolverton was possessed of a certain grim humour, and instinct for the management of the quick crises was the measure of his success in affairs.

"I'm Samuel Wolverton, and you are Frank Melville," he said. "I listened to your conversation. I won't apologise; I am glad I did it. It seems to me, Mr. Melville, that your father's son has it back at me now. It seems to me that you hold the marked cards."

He stopped and looked at the two and then went on:

"Mr. Melville, what's it the ministers say? I am not much at going to church. But don't they say that when a man has wronged another the best amends he can make is confession of his fault?"

But, although a moment after the young man extended his hand, Wolverton was conscious that his daughter, whom he held his dearest possession, never would be the same to him, that distrust lay between them; that, at the height of his success, Melville's son had turned the marked cards against him.

M. Wood.

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Love after Death.

"WELL, I never did take much notice of that kind of thing, but when something comes to the certain knowledge of a man, and that something he can neither explain nor reason out, then I say there must be *something* in it; and I don't believe in laughing at any one who does have faith in such things!"

And Tom Wardwell struck a match and relighted his cigar.

In the Club they had been discussing the "occult," and had turned to Tom Wardwell for his opinion.

The answer at once aroused interest and evoked a request for further information.

There were some moments of expectant silence, and then Wardwell, tossing away the stub of his cigar, leant back his head, and closing his eyes, said, at last:

"Yes, I do know something about this thing; that is, I know enough about it to know that I know nothing about it, except that such things are. If you care to listen, I'll tell you what I know, and you can make your own explanations—if you can!"

"All right, Tom, let's have it!"

"Some years back," began Wardwell, "I held a position in a large import house as head bookkeeper, with some six or eight fellows to look after. They were ordinary fellows, but there was one among them who would have attracted anyone's attention had they only caught his eye.

"He was a light-hearted fellow, near his thirties. He was not handsome, for his features were not regular, although great strength of character was denoted in every feature; but it was when you looked full into his eyes that you discovered the source whence came the light that fell upon his countenance. An irresistible influence fell upon you, and at once visions of all that was good and pure would flood your mind.

"You wouldn't wonder," continued Tom, as the others looked incredulous, "if you could have known him as I did. He was none of your 'goody boys,' but just a pure, upright man.

"Well, for some reason he took to me, as I did to him, and after a time I said to him one day: 'Fred, how is it you are always so happy? Don't you ever get discouraged, or have the "blues," or things go wrong with you, as they do with the rest of us fellows?'

"For an instant he looked at me with a look of surprise and a shade of pity in his glorious eyes, and then he said, 'Come home with me Tom, and I will show you as far as I can what it is that keeps me happy.'

"And then he told me of his home, and of his wife; he had been married six years, but no young fellow, having just won a bride, could go into more raptures than he did over his wife, and then he said, while the tears stood in his eyes, 'but I can only half tell it, Tom; no one can ever know what that woman is to me. I could not tell to anyone the heart-love and life we have and live.'

"I was awed by his emotion, and I said to him, 'Fred, that must be Heaven on earth to live such a life as that, and yet it is an awful thing for one human being to be so wrapt up in another, for life is short at the best, and —if—one should be called——'

"And here I hesitated, for he had turned to me again, and taking both my hands within his own said, while such a gladness rang in his tones, 'why, Tom, old fellow, that's the very best part of it! We are *never* going to be separated. We shall *always* have each other, right to the end of eternity!' And here he laughed a laugh that came from the very depths of his heart.

"I stood and looked at him in amazement, and the doubt just flashed across my mind if this man's brain was quite sound. 'But anyhow,' he broke in, 'come up to the house and see my wife at home.' I did go with him, and saw this happy couple in their new Eden of a home.

"Often he would ask me, yes, urge me, to go home with him; I was glad enough to go then, but since I have sometimes thought that it was because they pitied my loneliness out of the abundance of their love and love's surroundings, and oftentimes sacrificed the pleasure of evenings spent by themselves, in order to give me pleasure. And pleasure it was! That was the brightest time of all my life.

"Once, and once only, they touched upon the subject of their belief, that they were never to be separated! And it was clear that both firmly believed in that.

"Of course it was impossible for me to have any such faith, and not for the world would I have attempted to discuss this subject with them; and as I felt some hesitancy in asking questions, I did not gain as much information upon the subject as I should have then liked. I found they had made a long and careful study of this matter, and although they were by no means what is generally known as Spiritualists, yet they firmly believed that by pure and holy living here in the body, it would be granted to the one called first to the after life, to dwell in spirit near to the one on earth, until the time when they should once again join hands in the Spirit Land.

"It was a very comforting thought, but I could not help the shudder that would come over me when I thought of the blackness of despair which would surely come over my friend should he lose this idol of his life, and find that all his hopes were vain!

"But of these thoughts I said nothing, and the couple lived on, and loved each other more and more, and nothing eventful occurred to mar the happiness of their lives, until one morning I went to the office, and found Fred's desk unoccupied.

"As he had been there as usual the day before, I tried to think nothing of it, but as the day wore on and I heard nothing from him, I began to grow uneasy, and was about to send a messenger to him, when the door opened, and a boy came to me with a note; my fingers

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trembled in spite of all I could do as I unfolded it, and read just the one line:

"'COME UP AS USUAL TO-NIGHT.—FRED.'

"I tried to feel relieved as I read this, yet I had a strange foreboding of some ill to come which I could not throw off.

"When I came in view of the house, the first sight which met my eye was a large and most beautiful wreath of white and crimson roses hanging upon the bell! That was just like Fred and his wife; no mourning, nothing sombre, nothing sad for them when that journey was taken, for I knew at once that the idol of his life had been 'glorified,' as they always expressed it. 'There *is no death!*' was the strong point of their belief.

"I was now at the door, and I longed and yet dreaded to see Fred. What could I say to him? Should I encourage him with these false hopes, only to see him plunged in deep despair, or should I from the very first try to dissuade him from such false hopes, and tell him —tell him what?

"Just then Fred came in sight, and one glance into his face told me how cruel it would be to try to shake his faith in the belief that was so wondrously holding him up at such a time and under such circumstances as would have crushed most men. His eyes were heavy and swollen, and his face had a look of much physical suffering. For he had held the loved one in his arms from the first of it, until she had given him the last kiss, as he told me afterwards, and said with the fluttering breath: 'Don't be lonely, Fred, darling; I'll come to you as soon as I can; I know it won't be long'—and then——

"Well, that's all he told me, but I knew from his face that the shock was great, and that the great loving heart was even now longing and aching for just one responsive look and touch from the dear one who had never before remained unmoved by even the slightest look or word from him she loved so passionately.

"I could find no words to say to him, so I simply took his arm and he led me to where she lay.

"I won't weary you with details, but pass over the next few days.

"After it was all over Fred came back to the office, and I alone realised the terrible strain under which he did his work. It pained me to the heart to see him hasten as it came towards night, so that he should lose no time in returning to the little home, always expecting the return of her who had promised to come; and then each morning the eyes had a weary look, as though he had watched far into the night, and watched in vain.

"He would not allow me to stay with him during this time, for he had said when I urged the point, 'No, Tom, not yet; when she comes I want to be alone with her.'

"One morning, about a couple of weeks after he had laid his wife to rest, he came to me with such a bright look upon his face, all the weariness gone and a look of great joy and triumph shining from every feature. I was afraid the fellow's mind had indeed turned, and that which he had so longed for he imagined had come true.

"He came close to me and whispered, 'Tom, she's come at last!' I looked him steadily in the eyes for an instant, and then said the only thing I could say, 'Fred, I'm so glad for you!'

"Well, it was quite a long time before he asked me to come to the house again, but finally he did invite me, and I went. Then he told me how his wife administered to all his wants and comforts, just as she had always done before she left this early life.

"'I cannot see her. I hear her voice; I don't think you will be able to, but I can hear it, although she never talks of where she is, nor the conditions, and I dare not question her. I am content to wait until she tells me I may come, as she has already told me that time is not far distant.'

"Those were his words.

"By this time we had reached the house, and just as in the days gone by the light streamed cheerily out from all the windows.

"It was with a thrill of awe, and something of fear, that I entered with him, fear lest I should indeed find that his mind was turned, and awe, lest that not being the case, I was about to be a witness to a mystery no mortal man had ever witnessed before.

"We found the little table laid for two, with all the care and daintiness I had always seen in his home.

"After going home with him several times, the strangeness wore away somewhat, and we would chat about the affairs of the day, or discuss some subject as in the old days, but always in a subdued manner.

"And so she cared for him, and kept his home, and they held sweet communion together for as much as a year, and many a time, in the meanwhile, I have sat in a shady corner of the room, and listened to the sweet sound of melody, played by spirit fingers.

"One morning he came to me again, and said, 'Be sure you are with me to-morrow night, Tom, for then I am going Home!' I turned to him quickly, and knew what he said would come true, for it seemed even then that the light from the other world was shining upon his countenance.

"Being a practical kind of man, I did not like the idea of spending the night alone with him, especially as in the morning he would be found dead, so I sent a note round to a friend of mine, a doctor, a man upon whom I knew I could depend, and simply told him to come to Fred's house that night at eleven o'clock. I knew I could let him in at that hour, unknown to Fred, and I also knew he would do as I asked, and wait for any information I chose to give him.

"He did not fail me, and as I met him in the hall after Fred was in a deep sleep, I told him in a few words that Fred was sure he was going to die sometime during the night, and if such should be the case, I wanted a third party in the house. He nodded his head and accepted the explanation, although I knew the shrewd old fellow knew there must be something more to it. I showed him to a room, and after a few moments conversation I left him and returned to Fred's room.

"As I entered his room in the dim light, I saw a shadowy form flitting near the bedside. I saw the smile hover about Fred's mouth as he stirred uneasily in his sleep, and then I saw the shadowy form distinctly, and the sweet face of his wife bent over him. I saw her white arms clasp his form, I saw a spirit form arise from his body, and heard a soft whisper say, 'Come, my darling,' and his voice faint and far off reply, 'My wife,' and when the mist had cleared before my eyes, I saw Fred, with the smile still on his lips, dead!

"I called to the doctor; he came and looked at him, and simply said, 'Dead!'

"Death was ascribed to heart disease."

Wardwell arose hastily, the tears rolling down his cheeks, and said, "Good night!" and left the room. The others sat silent for a few moments, while some incredulous ones slowly shook their heads; but one of the others remarked, as they all prepared to depart:

"I believe that was true. I never knew Tom Wardwell to lie."

E. THORPE.

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HOMESPUN YARNS.

By Levin Carnac.

VI.—THE SQUATTER'S WIFE.

TOWARDS the end of last summer, I was coming back from Dublin to London by one of the Irish boats, and as far as Falmouth I hardly exchanged a dozen words with any of my score or so of fellow passengers.

At Falmouth, however, the tedium of the voyage was finally banished by my making the acquaintance of a bronzed and g izzled globe-trotter, who came on board there, looking about as bored and lonely as I felt myself.

Coming along the gangway a porter stumbled and dropped a small handbag of his into the water, and the new arrival reproved him in a terse and forcible arrangement of invective which was fragrant with the aroma of the Bush. I sympathised with him, and fished up the bag with a boat-hook that happened to be handy. Half an hour later we were "talking Australia" over an introductory bottle of Bass.

My new acquaintance was a man of sixty or thereabouts, and he had apparently spent his whole life wandering about the world seeking the rest he could not find in stagnation.

As I had myself only recently returned from Australia, our conversation naturally turned on the land of wool and gold, and ere long, to my no small satisfaction, I found that my friend had been there in the fifties, those heroic times when half the adventurers of the world were hurrying to the Golden Land as fast as winds and waves could bear them, some of them to become rich in a few weeks, and poor again in as many days, and most of them to struggle through their attack of gold fever, and either die of it or recover from it pretty much as they were when they took it.

"Yes," he said, glancing with a dreamy, tired sort of look in his eyes along the beautiful bay down which we were now steaming; "those were wi.d times, and a lot happened that never got known in the outer world. There's many a rich man moving now in the best Colonial society who wouldn't care to meet himself as he was thirty or forty years ago, say on the pavement in Collins Street, or in the vestibule of Menzies' Hotel. I remember a lady who died a few years ago in Melbourne in he odour of sanctity and respectability, who—well, as we're both 'old chums,' and we've nothing better to do, I'll spin you the yarn. She's left no family behind her, and as I'll mention no names, there'll be no harm done to anyone.

"It was just as the first rushes were over, and the diggings had been glutted w th a crowd of vagabonds who had no idea of steady work at gold-digging or anything else, that I had made a decent little pile on the Burraloo Creek on Sydney side, and thought I'd have a spell and see the new country a bit. So I started down to Sydney on the stage, and after about fifty miles we got stuck up by a gang of bush-whackers. The bush was full of these blackguards along the tracks from the different diggings to the townships; most of them were men who had failed at the diggings and turned to this as an easier way of getting gold than grubbing for it at the bottom of a shaft.

"Well, we showed fight, and for half-an-hour things were pretty lively round the coach. In the end we beat the whackers off at a cost of one man killed, three wounded, and one wom n badly scared. That woman was the wife of a squatter whose station was about twenty miles farther down the road, and as I had got a bullet in my arm, which, if I hadn't stopped it, would have spoilt her beauty for ever, nothing would do but my going to spend a portion of my holiday at the station and be nursed. Of course I accepted, and by nightfall found myself comfort ible.

"In a fortnight or so my wound was nicely healed, and I had made great progress in the good graces of my host and his pretty wife. In the case of the latter, I am sorry to say, I had made more progress than was good either for her or myself. No word had ever pa sed between us that her husband might not have heard, but you know how much can be understood in such matters without any actual talking. She was young enough to be her husband's dau_hter, and I was not long in discovering that, to her, married life in the Bush was nothing more or less than slavery in the wilderness.

"She had married her husband, I am afraid, for his money, and a few y ars' 'solitary confinement,' as I have heard her call it, had suffic d to make him utterly intolerable to her. I was vain enough at the time to believe that if anything sudden were to happen to the old man I should not have much di ficulty in consoling her for his loss. My surmise proved correct as the third week of my stay was drawing to a close.

"For two or three days we had noticed a rather suspicious-looking character, half-Londoner, half-dust-fossicker, hanging about the home paddock, and one day I took it into my head to ride him down and get an explanation. I didn't get anything satisfactory, so I decided to march him up to the station for further inquiries. To this he seemed to have very strong reasons for objecting, and when I rode at him to collar him, he whipped out a six-shooter and took a pot-shot at me. He just missed me, and the next moment I had the drop on him, and he showed the white feather and went like a lamb.

"Things turned out pretty much as we expected. In those days the Knights of the Bush thought as little of sticking up an out-of-the-way station as of plundering a stage; and the loafer that I had captured was, as I had half suspected, the spy of a gang which attacked us that night, after shooting a man we had sent to the police-depôt for assistance.

"As we had caught their spy, and perhaps bribed or frightened information out of him, there was no pretence of sneaking into the house, as swagmen wanting work, or anything of that sort. They just posted half-a-dozen men with rifles to cover the two doors of the house, and sent a man to call upon us to surrender, and throw our arms out of the windows, under penalty of having the house burnt over our heads.

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"We knew too much of the doings of that sort of scoundrel to look upon this as an idle threat. There were even cases known of whole townships being stuck up and looted by the big bushwhacker gangs that infested the bush in the fifties, and if one of these had got us now, the look-out was pretty mean. Still we had no hesitation in deciding to fight, for these brutes were as treacherous as they were cruel, and surrender would probably mean only another kind of death for the men, and what would be worse than death for the women.

"There were eight of us in the station-house, five men —the squatter, myself, and three home-hands—the squatter's wife, and her maid, and the Chinese cook. We were well armed, and the part of the house we garrisoned was log-built and practically bullet-proof.

"Mr. Jones—I call him that because it was not his name—opened the ball by giving the envoy three minutes to get out of sight, and then dropping him in his tracks because he didn't move fast enough. The reply to this was a volley from some dozen rifles from behind a brush-fence that hedged one side of the home paddock, and then the row began.

"There's no need for me to describe the fight, and I'm not a good hand at painting scenes in gore. Suffice it to say that a dropping fire was kept up on both sides for hours far into the night, besiegers and besieged 'firing on the flash' wherever it betrayed the presence of an enemy. All this time Mrs. Smith moved quietly about, helping us to bind up wounds and bringing us food and liquor as we wanted them, her face white and set, but showing no sign of fear or weakness, as most women would have done under such circumstances. Only once did she betray what she really felt, and that was in a whisper which reached my ear alone.

"Towards two in the morning, she brought some bread and meat and whisky to the window where I was stationed, and, as she put them down beside me she came up close and put her hot hand on mine—I can feel the thrill of that touch now, thirty years after—and said, in a dry, half-stifled whisper:

"'Oh Jack, I can't endure this much longer! For pity's sake get me away! There are two horses I've had saddled ready all night, and—'

"What more she would have said, or how I should have answered her, I can't tell you, for, at that moment,

I uttered a cry of horror as the terrible truth broke upon me.

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we heard a crackling outside the house, and before we had grasped what was the matter the verandah was ablaze.

"There was nothing for it now but a determined attempt to break out and run the gauntlet at any risk.

"'Jack! give me a pistol. I can shoot a bit and—and I *daren't* be burnt to death. Quick. They're breaking in!'

"I gave her one of my revolvers full loaded, saw that the other was all right, and, telling her to keep near me, went towards the door that was now shaking under the blows of the blackguards outside.

"What happened during the next ten minutes or so I cannot tell you. I remember only a fierce hand-to-hand fight, a horrible medley of oaths, pistol shots, cries of pain, and the roar of the flames growing deeper and nearer every minute.

"At last Mr. Smith and I managed to get his wife out by the back way, and then we broke for the stables. When we reached them Mrs. Smith said to me:

"'Go in and get the horses out. We'll keep the door.'

"While I was loosing the animals I heard two shots fired. One was the dull bang of a smoothbore loaded with ball, and the other was the sharp, spiteful crack of my own revolver.

"I dragged the two saddled horses out, and found Mr. Smith lying on the ground, and his wife standing by the door with the smoking revolver in her hand.

"'They have shot him, and I shot back. For Heaven's sake, let us go!' she said, throwing the pistol away as she spoke.

"Without a word I lifted her into the side saddle, and turned to look at the dead man. As I did so, she cried:

"'Oh, come, Jack, come! They've seen us.'

"But as she spoke the flames of the burning house shot up, and, almost in the centre of the dead man's forehead, I saw the small clean hole made by a revolver bullet fired at close range. I uttered a cry of horror as the terrible truth broke upon me, and, as she heard it, Mrs. Smith struck her horse over the ears and went at a gallop across the home paddock and away into the dim, silent bush beyond. Two minutes later I was up and riding for my life—in an opposite direction.

"Yes, it was a narrow escape. If I hadn't turned to look at her husband's corpse and seen that hole I should have believed her, and six months afterwards I should have married a murderess."

NAMAROU.

NAMAROU used to bring us milk at the dewy dawn of morning and also in the evening, at the hour when the cattle abandoned the fields in herds, and collected in the village, within the walls of ruined huts, to sleep in safety from the panthers and hyænas.

Milk is the drink of the captive, say the blacks. But why should it be more degrading to drink milk than doka (wine made from the palm tree) or dollu (beer made from millet)? The proverb does not say.

It is one of those prejudices all the more tenacious because there is nothing to justify it. It is sufficient without explanation to mention the surprise manifested by the natives when the white people asked them to get them some milk from those superb black and white cows, which resembled those of Switzerland.

I must add that their astonishment was even mixed with amusement. At mealtime in our dining-room, in the open air, under a ficus, the good people, highly amused, form a circle round us, winking their eyes in a manner not to be misunderstood, and, in a low tone, made endless comments, interrupted by stifled laughter, when they would see us, with the white foam on our lips, replaced the calabash on the ground when our thirst was appeased.

But Namarou took no part in these childish demonstrations.

Our request, the first day, had appeared to her very natural, and without saying a word, she placed a dish, turned upside down, on her head, which gave her the appearance of an Annanite sharpshooter, and wended her way towards the pastures. An hour later she brought back the dish full to the brim, and placed it before our hut, to the astonishment of the populace, who were not sparing with their jests for her.

But our milkmaid was not to be moved by such trifles; she maintained perfect silence.

Every day, with her wooden dish balanced on her head, she came to bring us milk.

A couple of silk handkerchiefs and four strings of beads had rewarded her for her kind attentions, and doubtless the hope of other small presents contributed to keep up her obliging behaviour.

As with all people for whom life has been a hard one, the woman in Africa is willingly compassionate; her intelligence has its flashes, her heart its delicate feelings, unknown to the stronger sex.

This observation is equally true of those in other latitudes.

There was no doubt that Namarou had had misfortunes, but of what sort? at what time? No one knew. The tattooing on her cheeks and chest resembled less the marks of distinction adopted by the people who live between the Como and the Volta, than the scars seen on those living much nearer to the westward, in Diammala and Djimini. All that was known about her was that she had come to that place many months before, she and her two children, clothed with a piece of cotton round her loins, like that worn by the rest of the savages, her luggage only an earthen pot and some calabashes.

Who was she? Where did she come from? Was she an escaped prisoner, or a repudiated wife? On all these points, one could only resort to conjecture. The people of the community had admitted her willingly. She had taken up her abode in an abandoned hut, without any one dreaming of disputing possession with her. Blade

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by blade, she repaired the thatched roof, killed the lizards on the walls by striking them with a piece of hard clay, beat down the earthern floor with stones, and there she lived peacefully.

The little ones grew, mingled with other juveniles of the village, and shared in their games. Both of them, besides, made themselves useful.

The girl, already, could crush maize and millet in a wooden mortar as well as an older person. Hardly as tall as her pestle, she worked, turning it with her arm for hours at a time, only varying her task by sifting the flour through a sieve made from fibres of the palm-tree. The boy spent half his time in the blacksmith's shed, keeping up the fire by means of a bellows of goat-skin, on which he played with both hands, imitating, with evident satisfaction, the beating of the tom-tom.

Namarou was not handsome. She had a low forehead and rather hard features; her chest was better preserved than is usually the case among the blacks who have passed their twentieth year; she was tall and long-legged, with the shoulders of an athlete. To see her sitting on her heels at the threshold of her hut, all in a heap, one would never suspect her majestic figure and robust breadth of shoulders. When she arose it was like the expansion of a spring; you would look on the ground, involuntarily, for the trap from which the tall apparition had just sprung.

She had nothing really pretty about her, except her eyes; these were immense and very soft, the calm eyeballs of Juno, like those of a heifer.

Simply dressed, she wore a narrow strip of cotton cloth from Kong, but more frequently she was girded with a band of fou, a natural texture, being a sort of reddish-coloured bark.

Her only ornament was a leather necklace from which was suspended a nugget of gold about the size of a pea; on her legs and ankles large glass beads and coins were strung in rows and securely fastened.

Her *coiffure* resembled that of the Mandé woman, the natural hair being held in position by the aid of false hair, and drawn up in a knot, with two little locks or curls falling over her temples.

The house of Namarou was particularly clean and well-kept, and might formerly have served as shelter for a tribe.

It was a round hut, in the form of a beehive, but of unusual breadth—it could accommodate twenty persons. The summary of the furniture was this: three straw mats rolled up, and about ten calabashes arranged in a row according to their size—that was all.

There were, however, fastened to the perches which supported the roof, a quantity of gri-gris, bones, cows tails, bunches of dried grass, feathers of the guinea-fowl and the paroquet, as well as a doll-fetish, a hideous little figure, carved out of a log.

In one of the calabashes, which was as large as a cauldron, was a heap of cotton, the crop of several months, which Namarou spun, and which she coloured with a little chalky earth crushed between her thumb and finger. Thus were her mornings passed.

Evening found her still busy, after sunset, when the kitchen fires were lighted all round in the neighbourhood, and in the stillness of the short twilight, when the blue smoke was soaring towards the paling heavens.

One morning our friend did not appear at camp as usual. Our "boys," who had gone to seek information concerning her, reported that she was in her hut, that there was a crowd of people gathered about the door, but she could not come; Namarou was dead!

There was, indeed, a crowd round the hut; a throng attracted by the cries of the children, who, on awaking had found their mother already cold, with stiffened limbs. In the interior, some old men and the principal persons of the village, among whom was the fetish-prophet, discussed her death in a very animated manner close to the corpse.

There she lay on her straw mat, her shrivelled hands lying on the strip of covering, which was pulled up to her chin, her head thrown over on one side, and her large eyes wide open.

It has been said that she would go as she came, mysteriously. Her country is accustomed to short agonies, dreadful fits, and, moreover, subtle poisons thrown by the hand of an enemy or a creditor. To end a dispute, or to balance an unsettled account, there is nothing more expeditious than a decoction of strophanthus. But Namarou had no enemies, and, still further, the poor creature had no creditors. A few handfuls of coins and a little nugget of gold that she wore round her neck, were all her fortune. Someone had given her a blow, perhaps. One does not die like that naturally, and the blacks know it.

From whence came the blow? From sorcerer or a demon?

Sakarabrou has his rages, and woe betide his victims! He pursues them even in death, stifling the mourning of their relatives, and exacting silence from friendly voices.

He carries desolation to the very corpse, which shall never know the repose of a grave in the hut, or near the village, under a mound ornamented with good fetishes, tufts of feathers, wild fruits placed on wooden sticks, and calabashes filled with dew, where the birds may come to drink.

The remains of his victims must be thrown far away in the brushwood at the mercy of the panthers and vultures.

Such are the ceremonies that are granted to him who incurs the hate of Sakarabrou.

It was not difficult to find out the cause of Namarou's death.

The fetish-prophet made a sign; the curious crowd scattered, making way for two men who carried a sort of litter made on four poles torn from the roof, which they tied together. It was a very frail contrivance, only suitable for the weight of a little child; Namarou, who was so tall, could never lie on it. But it was not a question of raising the body upon it, but of tying on this litter the different effects that belonged to the deceased; her cotton garment first, then her spindles, her dishes, and several of the gri-gris which hung on the walls.

These objects, that were the witnesses of her life and death, would conduct the bearers to the one who had committed the murder. Namarou seemed to follow these movements; her eyes were fixed and her eyeballs dilated as with fear.

Now they leave her on her straw mat, alone in the empty hut. The group of old people, the fetish prophet and his acolytes carrying the litter, escorted by the crowd, go towards the dwelling of the fetishes, the temple of Sakarabrou, which is an inclosure containing a tree, half dead, whose old trunk is hollow with gaping cavities. In these receptacles fruits are deposited and dishes of "fonto" for offerings to the bad spirits. It is useless to take any trouble for the good ones, these people only flatter those whom they fear. On a low branch hang the tattered clothes that the demon wears

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when he appears among the circle of dancers by torch-light, on the evening of some great fête; also the tunic of leaves and the dragon's head with its threatening mouth. Beneath this disguise, according to the common belief, is the real presence! Sakarabrou is there!

The two men place the litter on their heads: shuddering, they wait hesitatingly. Although heretofore seeming quite indifferent, they now shiver and tremble, their faces become convulsed, and they shake their light burden. They can control themselves no longer; one single phenomenal suggestion makes them the docile instruments of the sorcerer, who, with an irresistible gesture, bends them to his will and sends them off at his command.

They scamper away, capering, running through the village in every direction, striking against the huts on this side and on that. Sometimes they lean against a door, listening, and then set off again at a mad pace.

From the spot where we are, an eminence at the entrance to Sapiase, the land slopes gently, so that the eye can follow all the particulars of the scene. There are cries and angry protestations when the runners, striking against a cabin, panting and streaming with perspiration, halt for a moment to take breath. The owner of the hut, fearful of being considered guilty of witchcraft, defends himself with vehemence, and calls upon the others as witnesses. They all know him. Is he capable of doing any harm to any one? Why, then, should he have made fetish against Namarou? He had no fault to find with her. They were friends. But the runners have gone away, and he is appeased.

This lasts for hours, while I think of poor forgotten Namarou, who is lying over there in her hut, still waiting, with her eyes wide open.

It is past noon, when, for the twentieth time, the two demoniacs return to the sacred inclosure, where they stop at last, panting for breath, with froth on their lips.

They lean stubbornly, with their backs against the fence, from which it is impossible to get them away. The crime has not been committed by a human being, consequently it is the fetishes who struck Namarou last night.

She is condemned now; her body shall not repose in the ground.

Then bursts forth a ferocious clamour, a concert of imprecations, and the troop hurls itself towards the quarry.

They bring to the middle of the place some gigantic tom-toms, hollowed out of the trunk of a tree, and the orchestra commences, making little taps as a prelude. Then the cadence becomes quicker, and the noise swells like the grumbling of a storm.

Namarou has been rolled up in her straw mat, and they bring her along, or drag her, rather. In hustling her about, the impromptu coffin breaks, and her head hangs down, raking the ground with its high knot of hair.

Then, throwing the body on the ground, another round is begun.

At first, they stand pressed one against another, marking their steps, with their backs bent and their arms dangling by their sides; then the dancers straighten themselves up and go off at a dizzy gallop.

In a cloud of red dust, the whole village whirls, a thousand persons, men, women and children; the young mothers with their children hanging to them in a sort of stirrup, like a soldier's cartridge pouch.

The fetish prophet and his men keep up the excitement with blows of the cat-o'-nine-tails, whose thongs clap on the greasy epidermis with a noise like that of wet linen.

The uproar has put all the domestic animals to flight The sheep and goats have run to the underbrush, the frightened chickens are perched on the roofs, and the cows, huddled together on the prairie, stop their grazing, and look on anxiously, with their necks outstretched.

When the tumult is at its loudest, some of the men, with a rush, take possession of the corpse, and carry it off at a run towards the woods.

For an hour more the dances and songs keep up with redoubled fury. Then, suddenly, the beating of the tom-tom ceases. Three blows are given, at long intervals, and all is silent.

The charm is broken; slowly and quietly the crowd disperses and the people go home calmly, feeling that they have done their duty.

Evening comes on, and the village has returned to its accustomed tasks. The housewives go to draw water, the pestles resound in the mortars, pounding the maize and millet.

The blacksmith in his shed, is making implements for war and tools for farming, and from the hive-shaped huts the smoke is again mounting towards the pale sky.

M. ALEXANDER.

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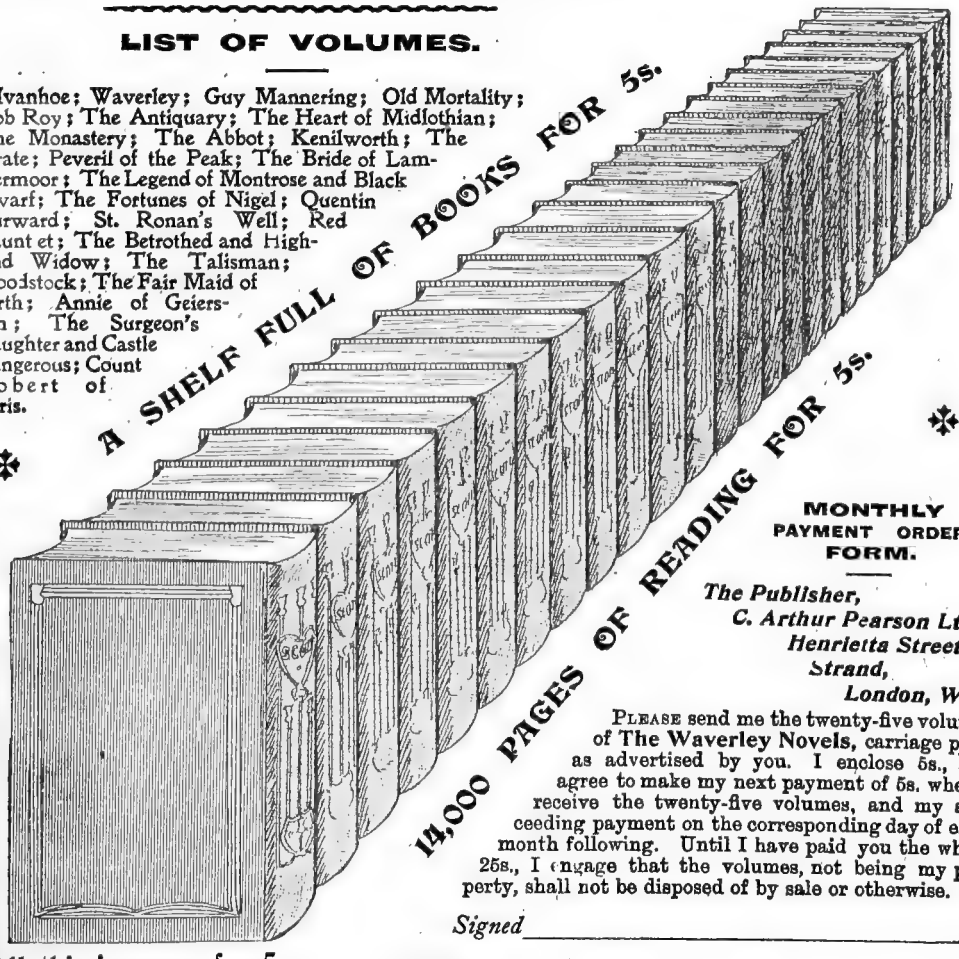

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FOR YELLOW GOLD.

A Story Told by an Old Western Miner.

WHEN the stage "went light" they ran out the small buckboard, but when there were more than four passengers the big mud waggon was "put on."

This was a buckboard day, for there was not a single passenger.

What was more to the point, as the Gold Butte Mining Company regarded it, was that under the driver's seat was a box with ten thousand dollars in the newest of tens and twenties in it.

The driver had looked very blue when he drove his four mustangs from the post-office—where he took on a very flat leather bag, which spoke loudly of the incapacity or disinclination of the Thimble Spring people for letter-writing—over to the railway station, where he was to take on the box. Things were going all wrong at home. That was why his brown face looked so haggard; that was why he held so loosely to the "lines;" that was why he chewed so hard on the bit of "plug" in his mouth.

"Such hard scratchin' I never seed afore," was what he had said as he had listlessly thrown the mail bag into the waggon: "can't git no decent job nowadays. Nothin' ter be had by prospectin'—tried thet time an' agin; ef I git anything it peters out in ide a week. I might make a strike over to Sand Gulch, but it's a long way off, an' me an' Sue an the kids hez moved so often 'at that we can't raise nothin' ter move on now. Why in Sam Hill did Sue hev ter git that rheumatiz jes now, when we're so hard up? It's a shame. Why can't Bill git someth n' ter do?—great, big, lunk-headed cuss. Ef I had a brotl er poorer'n a crow, d'ye think I'd go and live on him till thar' warn't nuthin' ter eat in the house? Shoo, Zach Springer, you're a fool. Bill hain't done that. He ain't ter blame fer gittin' his leg broke that time. Bill's all right, but he's onlucky. Been tryin' fur a month ter git a job an' can't git in nowhere. He's willin' ter work. He'd stan' cotch deep in the creek all day long washin' out tailin's if he could make his salt at it. Tried it fer six weeks and didn't get enough to buy a pair o' gum boots. Woa, Buckskin! Hang that one-eyed crow bait! he'd jam right into the station platform ef yer didn't saw his teeth eout."

And then the box was taken on, and the express agent had something to say. That "something" was not to Zach Springer's liking. He chewed harder than ever on the bit of plug, and sawed the hard mouths of the mustangs by an unnecessary yanking of the reins.

It was a positive relief to be able at last to whack his lash down upon the sides of the nervous brutes and turn them loose for a forty mile run to Gold Butte.

Why had he needed a lecture from a hireling of the Express Company, and why should that smooth-jowled agent have looked at him with such dark suspicion?

"They think 'cos I get stood up down ter Black Rocks las' time I had a big load o' gold thet I need to be preached to every time I go out now with a full box. The stoop-shouldered, desk-settin' hounds! I'd like ter see one of 'em handlin' the ribbons when thar's a Winchester lookin' at 'em with an eye as big as a bar'l head. Don't tell me they wouldn't give in! The sweet-scented, calf-skin booted young ladies! Thar ain't a man among 'em."

Zach Springer's indignation was now in more complete possession of him than had been his feeling of blueness a little earlier. What he had delivered himself of just now is not what he would have said had he voiced his true sentiments with reference to the express agent's lecture. In between the words ran the thought that "they" had suspected him of having a hand in the Black Rocks robbery. Had that been the reason the stage company had cut down his pay to "sixty" a month? The chances were that it was. It was too blamed mean for a lot of hounds, like these people, to come it so high-handedly over a poor man who only wanted his own. Wouldn't it serve them right if——

The white dust of the desert rolled up on the mustangs' hoofs in little puffs, and sprays of it, powdery fine, followed the turn of the wheels half way up, there to be caught by the breeze and drifted behind in a long cloud that followed the buckboard like a haunting spirit. Sometimes, as the light breeze shifted, it came back upon the buckboard and its driver like heavy thoughts on the conscience of a guilty man.

It would serve them just right! Besides that, only think—ten thousand! What would the people in Mexico or Guatemala, where he would fly, know or care if somebody up in the far-off Nevada had dumped a box off his buckboard and gone back and got it after a few days—may be a week? It would have to be a dark night, wouldn't it? You couldn't go and get a box like that in the daytime and take it anywhere, for the whole country would be out looking for the man who had it Maybe a month. That would be better. It would all blow over by that time. Let's see, would it? Ten thousand was a good deal. Those stage-stoppers were always striking the box on the wrong day. They never got so much as that at one haul. In two months, then—perhaps two months. But it would have to be well hidden.

And the thought stuck to him despite all attempts to keep it off, though by the time he had driven the mustangs into Red Canyon his indignation at having been suspected by the company had died down. The box at his feet had taken on a new meaning for him. It meant smart gowns for the wife; it meant a good schooling for the children. Those five little ones had had a hard "rustle" of it to get what scraps of learning they had thus far managed to clutch; and as for clothes, they were dressed like juvenile scarecrows. Yes, all the hard scratching would be over if he dared to do what many another hard-pushed man had done. Resolving the whole matter down to a plain, clear-cut proposition, it was after all, simply a question of "nerve."

Here was the place to do it. Right here, where the

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high, scraggy rocks, with the patches of sage-brush atop, come so near to the buckboard. It could be thrown over there anywhere—into the sage-brush. It would be as well concealed as though buried in six feet of earth. The buckboard had reached the top of a long down-grade. Zach put on the brake and twisted the reins about the brake-handle. As if about to take a plunge into ice-cold water, he reached down for the box. But, wait a bit. He took off his big sombrero and hung it on a projecting rock. Then, flashing out his six-shooter, he sent a bullet through the brim of the hat, which he then replaced on his head. Though it had been hot enough when he started on from Thimble Spring, there seemed to be a chill in the air just now. Would they believe the story that he would have to concoct, even though he showed them the hole in the hat-brim? What would he care whether they did or not? They already suspected him. If he had the name he might as well have the game. He looked at a spot where the sage-brush clust red thickest, and made a mental throw or two in a tentative way in order to "get the distance."

What would Bill say? Bill was an honest man. He would blush with shame every time his brother's name was mentioned after that, for, of course, he would know. She would never suspect Any kind of a story would bamboozle her. Bill was smart; he could put two and two together as quickly as any man in the country. And yet Bill himself was a little reckless sometimes. He had been acting very queer of late, and had been over to Johnson's a good deal, drinking and playing cards with the boys. That would not do. Bill must be looked after, he was only a young fellow—a mere boy even if he had been trying to raise a moustache lately.

Yes, Bill was a good deal younger than he. Why, he remembered well the day he was born, when they took him to show him his new baby brother. He used to carry Bill all round, and he was the first one to set him on his legs, and try to make him walk. He remembered how it used to hurt his own head when Bill got a knock by falling out of his high chair. Bill was just as much to him now as ever, and those knocks which fate and the weakness of his nature were giving him now, hurt him just as badly—worse, perhaps, than they did brother Bill. What would Bill say?

He laid his hands upon the box again. It would be safe enough behind the rocks, there, under the sage-brush, as safe as if . . .

"Git up, thar! Git, Buckskin! Git, old Gabe! Ye lazy critters. G'lang!" And down came the long lash upon the dust-covered backs of the mustangs, and off down the long grade they ran, making the dust fly in the canyon as it never flew before. For Zach had grasped the reins in a grip of iron, and both his big cowhide boots were planted firmly on the box.

"This 'ere is what I call goin'!" he said, ten minutes later, as they were still flying down the grade. "But I lost some time with a fool notion that I orter a ben licked for ever thinkin' on a minit. Well, the mustangs got a good rest. Makin' up fer it now, though. They'll soon be in a lather. I'll git to the half-way house in a quarter of an hour, and then I'll take a good horn. I feel kinder narvous yit. That 'ere box is a heavy load on a man's mind. I s'pose the superintendent up to Gold Batte is worryin' about it too. Never mind, ol' feller, you'll see that stuff stowed away in yer safe afore sundown.

"What's this? A hold up, sure as shootin'!"

Out from behind a tall rock a man, with a piece of dark calico over his face and a very large Winchester in his hand, had suddenly sprung, and the muzzle of the rifle looked right into Zach's big round eyes.

The brake scraped the wheels and made the sparks fly.

The mustangs came to a sudden stand.

There was no getting by that Winchester.

"I reckon you've got the drop on me, stranger," the driver coolly remarked. "Stick up my hands? In course I will, ef you insist on it, but I tell yer these 'ere mustangs is mighty skittish, an' it's on ther daown grade. So yer needn't shoot if they start up, fur it'll be yer own fault. I s'pose yer arter th s 'ere box. Throw it out? It's too heavy fer that. Ye'll hev ter give us a lift."

The man with the gun said nothing, but the subtleties of the holding-up process were not so fine but that Zach understood every wave of the stranger's hand and every shrug of his shoulders, when the waves and shrugs meant anyt ing. Zach had been held up b fore.

He of the calico m sk did not step forward at once. In this suggestion t at he should assist in taking off the box he seemed to suspect some trick. But one of Zach's h nds were held aloft and the other, with the our reins in it, was on the level of his shoulder. The man edged up to the buckboard, exchanging the weapon which he presente l at Zach's head for a six-shot revolver.

"Thanks, stranger," said Zach, with forced merriment. "I never like ter hev one o' them 'ere long-barrelled things p'inted at me. They shoot too straight. Now, here ye are."

With his foot he shoved the box along until it was near the end of the waggon.

"Thar it is, help yourself: but ye'll find it a heavy load ter pack ef yer goin' far."

The robber's fingers grasped the box nervously.

"A green un at the biz," thought Zach; "mebbe that'll be an openin' here yit."

The robber pulled and hauled at the box, but it would not budge, for it was caught on a nail-head in the bottom of the waggon.

In his feverish anxiety to secure the gold, he lowered the revolver a little and grasped the box with both hands.

Swiftly Zach's right hand fell to his hip and out he whipped his bright barrelled pistol.

"Got the dead drop, stranger! It's no go!" he shouted. "Put that weepin daown, you fool!"—for the man was raising his pistol. "You won't? Then take that."

A flash, a report, and back fell the robber without a moan. His fingers clawed the dust for a moment, as if he were grasping for a hold on life. But the hold was not to be had, for he gave it up and lay there quietly in the dust.

The driver shoved his pistol into his holster and wiped the sweat from his brow. It had been a close shave for the box, and a closer shave for him.

"Taks a purty keen un ter git erway with Ol' Zach artor all," he chuckled, springing lightly from the buckboard, while a broad smile lit up his brown face. "This' ere means a big raise from ther stage comp'ny an' a hundred er two from the Gold Butte folks. I guess they'll think the ol' man's all right arter this. Hooray for hooray! my stock's riz! It's way up ter a hundred an' fifty. Whoop-e-e! Haw-haw-haw!"

He stooped down over the dead man and lifted the bit of cloth from his face.

"Good Heavens! It's Bill!" G. Hill.

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A Love in Tatters.

ELINOR RICHARDS worked in Olcott's shop. Dr. Frost was out driving with two lady friends, and they passed Olcott's.

"Oh, Dr. Frost, do let us go in here! They make everything. You can get your pockets full of all kinds of mechanical toys."

So they alighted and went in, and Dr. Frost was interested and amused, as he always was with mechanical devices, till he came to the table where sat Elinor Richards.

If Dr. Frost had been struck he could not have been more surprised. But nature and his professional training held his face in check. He stepped forward and held out his hand.

"Miss Richards! What a very unexpected pleasure! You have not forgotten me!"

Miss Richards had not forgotten. She glanced at his light gloves and at her own fingers wet with fresh paint.

"You must excuse me," putting her hands behind her. "I can't consent to ruin your gloves."

The Doctor smiled, put quite at his ease for the moment. That little wilful trick of refusal was one he knew quite well. She had put her hands behind her a great many times in the past when he had wanted to shake hands.

The little group passed on. Miss Richards sat down, drove her penknife into the table before her, snapped the blade short off, and went on with her work again.

Dr. Frost had entered on his profession without friends and in debt. And at the very outset he had said that since love and marriage lay in the natural order of things, he would choose a wife whose social standing should help and not hinder him.

He had met Elinor Richards the winter before. She had been spending some few weeks with her aunt, Mrs. Davis. Mrs. Davis did not belong to the extreme fashionable set. She lived in good style; had a good house, money, and more than the average culture and refinement. In a quiet way, Miss Richards, as her niece, became quite a celebrity.

Dr. Frost met her several times; at the opera first, and afterwards at the theatre. And then he fell into a habit of calling on Mrs. Davis informally, as his engagements would permit; and so when Miss Richards left the town he had grown to miss her.

He had settled with himself so firmly at the outset that he could not afford matrimony for years to come that he did not recognise any other sentiment than a passing interest. Elinor was not a girl to talk about herself; he had not the slightest idea of her circumstances or social standing beyond that implied by her relationship to Mrs. Davis.

But in his thoughts of that home which, by-and-by, he was to make for himself, he saw always at the head of his table a girl with grey eyes and brunette skin.

And now he had seen her again, and she was at work in a shop. Well!

Miss Richards went home from her work that night in a tumult, for which she had called herself various uncomplimentary names. If she had been more accustomed to mental analyses she would have understood that her own position was less the cause than the discovery of a very earthly streak in the man whom she had set very high among the gods. Dr. Frost had his face in very thorough control, but not so absolutely that Miss Richards did not feel the shock he had suffered.

The next day, or rather the next evening, Dr. Frost called on her. In that interview there was no trace of embarrassment on either side. Miss Richards gave him to understand quite naturally that she earned her own bread. But after he had gone she was cross and irritable, and then she cried herself to sleep.

In the next four days Dr. Frost saw her three times. What fascination drew him he could not define to himself. When he went away he coolly told himself that he was in love with her, and as coolly that it was a piece of folly from which he had better recover as soon as possible; and with a great pang at his heart set himself to make the most of the sweetness in Madeline Austin's smiles.

In October Mrs. Davis came back from some country visits she had been making with a severe cold, which developed itself into pneumonia. Straightway Miss Richards was summoned to attend her. That was the usual programme. Being the only niece in the family who had no regularly appointed home duties, all the sick people called on her for everything they wanted.

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But she did rebel a little against this call. Yet what could she do? The necessity was stringent. She went, of course.

"That man loves me, I believe, and I"—looking straight before her—"might love him."

She found Dr. Frost in attendance. He did not look in her face when they met. He had only a few words to spare; the case in the room beyond was too grave to admit of careless speech.

For a week matters went on after that fashion. Then Mrs. Davis began to mend. But the Doctor's visits did not cease.

Madeline Austin's smiles were not the less warm and sweet, but John Frost forgot them in the light of a pair of steady, cold, grey eyes. Out of Elinor Richards's presence he made resolutions innumerable, and went back again and again into the dangerous influence.

The steady, grey eyes saw it all, knew that the man rebelled, and was drawn by a power he could not help. Mrs. Davis told her niece that it was popularly reported that a marriage pended between Dr. Frost and a Miss Austin.

About the time that Miss Richards was hearing this, Dr. Frost was also being enlightened. He was attending Harry Vaughan, who had broken his leg.

"Smythe tells me that Miss Richards is back with Mrs. Davis?"

"Yes."

Then Dr. Frost heard something about Miss Richards which he refused to believe.

The next day Dr. Frost found Mrs Davis weakly weeping over a rumour that a dear friend had just been relating to her.

"Cruel, Doctor; women are so cruel to each other. Here's Mary Morris with nothing to do but to keep this cobweb of gossip afloat till it grows into something that isn't a cobweb."

"I don't understand," with a cold sinking at his heart.

"Elinor's birth was unfortunate. There were circumstances in her parents' history that were extremely painful—one of those family skeletons that nobody wants meddled with. And someone has begun rattling the dry bones, and there'll be no end to the clatter, I suppose."

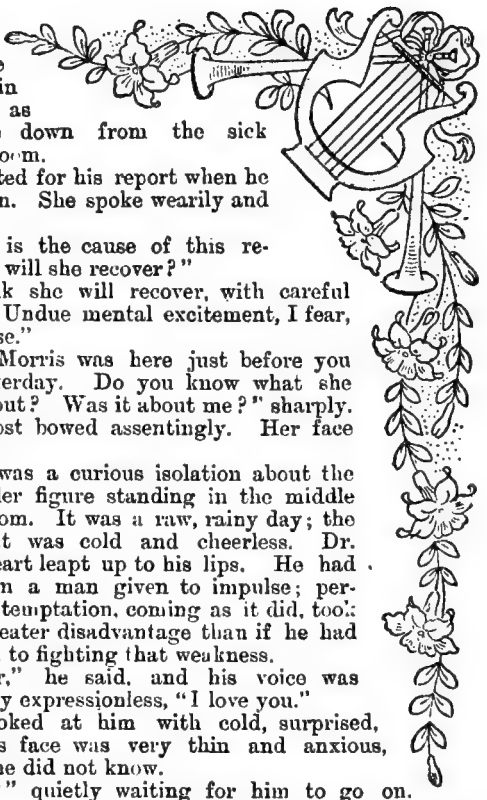
Mrs. Davis waxed hysterical, and Elinor came in, straight and tall, and sallow-faced with many nights' watching, and assisted the Doctor to minister to her aunt, their hands touching, asking and answering questions with mechanical coolness.

When the Doctor went away he shut his teeth hard to keep back an inarticulate expression—half groan, half an imprecation. Then he rode about till late at night and spent the rest of it in considering himself.

He could never marry her with this stain on her name. He moaned over that necessity of renunciation as bitterly as if he had ever had the intention of doing so. Now he thought he had. He fancied he might have faced everything else but this. He had to make his way in the world. He knew himself for a coward, and did not writhe the less bitterly for the knowledge. He did not turn, as a less generous man might have done, and accuse her of an endeavour to entrap him.

"I love her, and I shall never love anyone else. But I have not the courage to face her history, knowing that it is known."

All this was a poor preparation for meeting Miss Richards next morning when he went up to Mrs. Davis's in obedience to an early summons. He hoped she would be out of the way, but she met him in the hall as she came down from the sick woman's room.



She waited for his report when he came down. She spoke wearily and languidly.

"What is the cause of this relapse, and will she recover?"

"I think she will recover, with careful nursing. Undue mental excitement, I fear, is the cause."

"Mrs. Morris was here just before you came yesterday. Do you know what she talked about? Was it about me?" sharply.

Dr. Frost bowed assentingly. Her face hardened.

There was a curious isolation about the tall, slender figure standing in the middle of the room. It was a raw, rainy day; the grey light was cold and cheerless. Dr. Frost's heart leapt up to his lips. He had never been a man given to impulse; perhaps the temptation, coming as it did, took him at greater disadvantage than if he had been used to fighting that weakness.

"Elinor," he said, and his voice was thoroughly expressionless, "I love you."

She looked at him with cold, surprised, eyes. His face was very thin and anxious, but that he did not know.

"Well?" quietly waiting for him to go on.

"I said I love you. I am poor. I have my fortune all to make. I know your story. I can help you to bear it, or we will sink under it together."

To John Frost's alarmed eyes she seemed to grow taller and threateningly majestic. The cold eyes flashed angry lightnings; clearly Miss Richards had a temper. But save for a quiver of scorn in the clear tones, her voice was quiet enough. But before she spoke Dr. Frost's inner consciousness told him that he had not said the most felicitous thing.

"You are magnanimous. My poverty and my story. No, thank you, Dr. Frost. It would need a much stronger man than you to bear the double weight. Besides, would Miss Austin approve, I wonder, of your unequalled generosity?"

A dash of bitter red relieved the Doctor's paleness. He bowed and left her. Silence was dignified and—safe. He hated himself that he thought of that. But what could he have done, after all, if she had taken him at his word?

For two weeks more he saw Miss Richards nearly every day—saw her, and, for any emotion she betrayed, might as well have asked questions of and given directions to a skilful automaton. Then he did not see her, and Mrs. Davis confided her grievances.

"Elinor's gone home ill. She never had an illness before. And how am I to get well without her?"

Elinor came near finding this illness her last as well as her first. It was a low, nervous fever, wearing her down to skin and bone, and leaving her weaker than a baby, and irritable enough to make excusable her aunt's remark:

"Dear me, Elinor. There isn't much of you, but what there is is very trying in its quality."

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By this time it was mid-winter, and she was invited to convalesce in Mrs. Davis's house, which proposal she flatly declined, and went instead to the house of a friend, with whom she spent six delightful weeks, making the most of her invalid's privileges, and getting back strength and flesh, and something that was almost beauty.

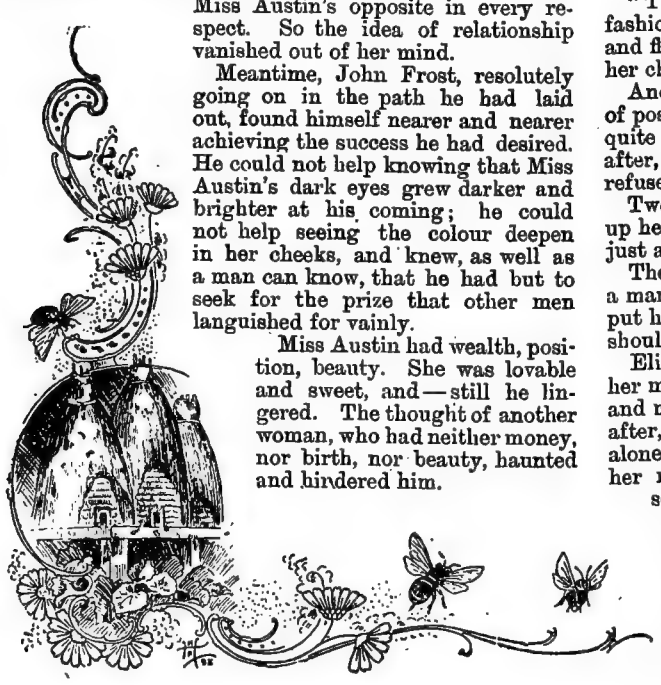
Among the men she saw was a rather elderly, artificial individual, whom she remarked chiefly because he bore the same name as herself. I am not going to make a mystery of the matter; it was her father, though she did not know that till some weeks later. He seemed in rather poor health.

In that country life, taking so much of its hurry and glitter as she chose, retiring behind the shield of her barely recovered health when she grew wearied, some latent possibilities developed themselves. No one asked if she had ever wrought for her daily bread; no one offered her pitying sympathy on account of her "story."

A well-bred, self-possessed girl, introduced sufficiently well by the friends whose guest she was, the very heterogeneous collection of elements called "society" asked nothing more. And among the rest Frank Austin fluttered about her, fitfully at first, as was his manner, and then settled down into a languid constancy of attendance, quite noticeable by those who knew the man.

Elinor did not mind much about him. She stood in no danger of falling in love. Down deep in her heart a steady pain throbbed and burned. She never mentioned John Frost's name; indeed, in these days, she had no occasion either for speaking or hearing it. When she first heard Frank Austin's name she regarded him with a quick little spasm of pain, remembering a certain Madeline Austin, whose name she had heard in quite another connection.

But Madeline Austin was slight and dark, with a flashing quickness of motion, and this young man had the build of a Hurcules; was blonde and slow — just Miss Austin's opposite in every respect. So the idea of relationship vanished out of her mind.



Meantime, John Frost, resolutely going on in the path he had laid out, found himself nearer and nearer achieving the success he had desired. He could not help knowing that Miss Austin's dark eyes grew darker and brighter at his coming; he could not help seeing the colour deepen in her cheeks, and knew, as well as a man can know, that he had but to seek for the prize that other men languished for vainly.

Miss Austin had wealth, position, beauty. She was lovable and sweet, and — still he lingered. The thought of another woman, who had neither money, nor birth, nor beauty, haunted and hindered him.

But one night, when the dance was done, he asked his question, and Madeline faltered her "yes," and Dr. Frost went home in the early dawn an engaged man; which fact Mrs. Davis wrote her niece very soon afterwards, taking a grim comfort in the telling.

Elinor was sitting with Frank Austin when her letter came. She read it, and flushed painfully. Austin was not looking at her. She laid it down, and startled herself with a bitter laugh.

"Miss Richards," a tone of alarm in his voice, "what has happened?"

"Nothing, positively. An earthquake, I believe, one of those social swallowings up that occur now and then in the best regulated circles, but nothing outside the interested parties, I assure you."

"I don't understand you at all," looking at her in a puzzled way.

"And I didn't mean you should. Dear Mr. Austin, I want you to go."

"I can do that, certainly," rearing himself aloft. "But I don't like to leave you in trouble if there's anything——" pausing wistfully.

"There isn't anything. I'm not in trouble. Oh, I can't tell you," covering her face in her hands.

Does anyone know what blundering spirit sometimes possesses a man?

"I don't want you to tell me. Oh, don't cry!" his own voice husky, and he came and stood over her; "because, Miss Richards, you see, I love you so," and he stood trembling in all his six feet of length.

Down fell Miss Richards' hands from her crimson face, and she stood staring in simple astonishment.

"Good gracious!" she said breathlessly.

Austin looked up at the sound and met her eyes.

"Is it so very preposterous?" he asked humbly.

"Yes. No, not preposterous at all, only so utterly impossible. Oh, you don't know!" breaking down again.

"I do know that I've blundered. I'll take it all back. You are not to think of it again."

"Then you don't—what was it, Mr. Austin?" woman-fashion coming all at once out of her grief and agitation, and flashing a smile into his face with the tears still on her cheeks.

And he, of course, bewildered by this sudden change of position, reiterated his assertion, to which she listened quite gravely now. And when he went away half-an-hour after, he had regularly proposed and been as regularly refused.

Two weeks after that there came a letter that broke up her established views of life as utterly as if she had just awakened from a dream.

The letter was from her father—such a letter as such a man would naturally write. He was rich—he could put his daughter at the head of an establishment that should gratify a high ambition.

Elinor had known comparatively little of the facts of her mother's history. She knew that she had left home and married clandestinely; that, little more than a year after, she had died at Elinor's birth, died neglected and alone; that the wretched little baby was taken by her mother's family, the father not caring even to see it, and making no provision for its maintenance.

So now, when the man who had caused all this misery reappeared and begged that his daughter would remember the ties that he had so long forgotten, trying to bribe her with promised splendours, she indignantly refused.

But, a little after, another letter came. Mr.

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Richards was ill, probably fatally so, and begged his daughter once more to come to him.

"He is your father, my dear," her grandmother said, and then the two went to the bedside of the sick man.

Mr. Richards did not die; but his convalescence was a long one, and he spent the time by the seaside after the summer came. Elinor was with him. "My daughter" seemed to have become the centre of the man's existence. He clothed her in splendid apparel, and flashed jewels before her undazzled eyes. She bore her changed estate with superb self-possession. She thought of those other days when she wore print dresses and soiled her fingers with a day's work, if not with a feeling of regret, at least without a sense of weariness or distaste in the memory.

Then when the summer was over they went back to town, and set up housekeeping on rather a grand scale. She met most of the people she had known before, at one time and another, all but Dr. Frost and Frank Austin. But both these meetings came about after a while.

A little while after she met Madeline Austin at a wedding reception. In the ebbing and flowing of the crowd they found themselves near each other. Miss Richards was magnificently attired in velvet and rustling silk. Miss Austin, for once, wore a dress that did not suit her. Her dark face looked swarthy by the contrast, and by Miss Richards's side she sank into insignificance. At least, that was what Frank Austin thought, looking at the two. Miss Austin's sole associations with Elinor were her few casual meetings with her in last winter's quieter life. If Elinor remembered her with a different recognition, she did not betray herself. Perhaps, when all at once the relationship between brother and sister revealed itself to her, she half wished that last winter's decision on his suit had been different. Miss Richards was wholly feminine.

Later in the evening Dr. Frost appeared. She had not seen him for more than a year. He was looking careworn, and much more than a year older. At first he did not recognise her. When he did they talked with an odd constraint on them both.

Mr. Richards came up while they stood together. Elinor presented him. There was a great deal of courtly grace in the elder man's bearing, and his demeanour to his daughter was perfect. The Doctor looked dazed and bewildered, and Elinor left him before he had recovered his wits.

Left him and cried half that night because—oh, uncertain human nature!—she did not grieve more deeply over her lost ideal.

But when John Frost called, after a few days, the old charm fell on her again. For the sake of those old days she could not help being gracious and sweet, and evidently, also, Dr. Frost could not help being swept off his feet.

"I heard of your engagement," she said at last. "It is not yet consummated, it seems."

"And may never be. Elinor, I was an idiot. I loved you better than any other human being even while I was speaking those fatal words to Madeline. Only my ambition stood in my way. I love you **now**, I swear to you."

Miss Richards was rather unprepared for this outbreak. She looked at him steadily for a moment or two.

"You must go, Dr. Frost. I think I ought to be very angry with you. Only I am sure that you cannot mean this I would never hear your voice again. How can you dare say such things to me? Go, now."

He went out silently, and met Frank Austin coming in.

"Oh, yes, Maddy gave me this for you," pulling out a slim envelope.

And Frost found himself summoned to attend his betrothed on a shopping expedition.

John Frost told Madeline Austin the truth one day. He did not mean to. It was as unpremeditated, as thorough an accident as every other event in his history had been. He told her about Elinor.

"And you love her yet?" the girl said. She was pale and trembling, but she was very brave about the matter.

"Heaven knows—I hope not! I will be as true to you as ever man was to woman; but you must know the truth in this matter. I will not begin our wedded life with a lie. I will be a good husband to you, Madeline."

"No," she said coolly, "I think that must be over between us. You are a free man, Dr. Frost. Go and tell Miss Richards, and see what she says."

He protested and urged, and in the end he went. And just about the time he left Madeline, Elinor was saying: "But before I say yes, Frank, you must understand that I used to work in Olcott's shop."

"My dear, I know all about it. I have known it ever since I first saw you. Dr. Frost was attending me at the time, and Maddy came home and told me about you."

"And there is something else I have learnt lately that Dr. Frost knew. My mother——"

"Dear, I know that, too. We will not distress ourselves with this old trouble. Your griefs are mine, too, and we will bear them together; but we will not think of them now."

"I must go and dress for Mrs. Saxton's dinner. You will be there?"

He met Dr. Frost a few yards from the steps.

"I was just coming to you and Maddy," and then he stopped in a little ineffectual mental search for dignified expression, and, failing, used the bluntest.

"Miss Richards and I are engaged to be married. She has just promised me."

Neither Miss Austin or Dr. Frost are married. I do not know what the future will do for them, though I do not believe she will ever trust him again. For a few months they thought she would die, but travel and youth and a strong constitution pulled her through. It was a hard blow for a girl of her character, and she will never again be as hopeful and trustful as before.

As for Dr. Frost, though his practice grows steadily, and wealth and assured position seem to lie in his way, he is hardly to be envied.

E. V. Hall.

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JIMMY.

"ANYTHING to-day, Mr. Brooks?"

"Nothing to-day, Jimmy."

The old man turns sadly away. He is very old. His coat is of rusty black and of ancient pattern, an old-fashioned high hat rests upon his silvery locks; but the coat and the hat are carefully brushed, and were it not for the very weary face beneath, one would not notice him so much.

Poor Jimmy! He had asked that same question at the same hour and the same theatre for many years, with always the same answer. He had been a good actor once and walked those very boards. The old walls had many a time resounded with laughter and applause of Jimmy's making.

He was a favourite then, he was watched and waited for, and no bill of the old house was deemed complete without the name of Jimmy Page. But now—well, it is different! He is old and it is a crime to be old. Everything else might have been forgiven, but that, never.

There were other actors now, young men and handsome men; then, besides, there were different people down in the front to look at them.

The old audience that used to love Jimmy is gone, no one knows where, but they are gone and have been these many years. Everything is changed—his old companions, brother actors of his other days, have faded away, and Jimmy sometimes wonders how it came that all have drifted so far and only he remains, forgotten and alone.

He replaces the old hat upon the bowed head and shuffles slowly across the stage, every nook and corner of which is rich in reminiscence to him. At the threshold of his old dressing-room he pauses for a moment—yes, it is the same looking-glass, with a face nearly as scarred as Jimmy's own. How often has it reflected his face in moments of triumph in the days of youthful power and happiness, as he looked into it; no wonder, he is far different now. Jimmy could see it. Far different. Then he was youthful, hopeful, young and full of bright thoughts for a happy future, but now—well, he is old, but that is sufficient. Jimmy understands and turns away.

He glances mechanically at the wardrobe scattered about him. It belongs to the new comedian. They say he will be a success, and above all he is young. Jimmy almost lets fall a tear as he wonders if the new one will ever be old.

He hopes not.

Down the passage he goes, where in brighter days he trod so happily, and at last he stands by the old stage door. There is his name, placed there thirty years ago. How well he remembers the night; and Fanny had written it there next to hers.

Poor, dear Fanny! She has gone with the other, and never again will cross that threshold, never again hear the creak of the old stage door. Gently, very gently, he pushes it open and goes out into the streets Some employés of the house are unloading luggage at the kerb. All speak to him as he shuffles by.

"Poor old Jimmy!" says one; "he was good once, so they say, but he is a 'has been' now."

Jimmy goes down the street, silent and alone. He does not heed the crowd that streams by him and buffets the old form here and there. He is thinking of something else. He is living in the days when so many were glad to know Jimmy Page, comedian.

As he climbs the little stairs of the house that Jimmy now lives in, he wonders how it came that the wise Providence has taken away all the other "boys and girls" and left him to grow so useless and so old.

"Ah, dear dad, how late you are!" says a cheery, girlish voice, as he enters the room.

Her nimble, kindly little fingers, the dearest in the world to Jimmy, take the old hat from the silvery locks and place it tenderly on the hook behind the door, lead the bowed figure to a comfortable armchair by the fire, and as he sits with a sweet, childish smile upon his patient face, Fanny, blithe and happy as a bird, busties about, singing gaily as she sets the "tea-things" on the modest little table.

It is not a banquet, just a plain, simple little meal, but how they enjoy it! How merrily little Fanny prattles on the happy plans for the future! Her needle is bringing them more and more every day, and there will be no more times like the old ones when they were so poor; and then the meal is finished and he is seated once more in the armchair and she is singing merrily through her work, and it really seems for the moment Jimmy has forgotten that he is old; it seems as though there was *some* place for him after all.

Then when her work is over and she sits at the little stool at his feet he tells her of the bygone days. He has told her all before so often, but then it is all so new to her.

He speaks gently of her mother. Ah! she was a wonderful artist, none like her now, Jimmy is certain of that. Too bad, too bad she had gone. She could show them to-day what acting was, but perhaps it was better after all. She would have been old now, Jimmy would have grieved to see her so.

A brisk rap at the door and open it flies.

"Oh, Jack!" and little Fanny runs to meet him.

"What a handsome, manly young fellow he is; no wonder everyone likes him, no wonder Jack is a success," thinks old Jimmy as he cordially shakes his hand. He is a royal fellow is Jack, and Jimmy loves him—yes, even if he is the new comedian.

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What a happy evening they pass, Jack singing and joking till his humour even effects old Jimmy, who really tries to sing himself.

It is an old song; they used to laugh at it once, but something is wrong; his voice is not quite in tune, something lacking, it is not so funny as it once was, and after he has finished Jimmy laughs quietly to himself and then looks at them.

Jack is gazing sorrowfully into the fire, and Fanny is weeping very softly on Jack's shoulder.

Yes, Jimmy feels they are right; he is certainly growing old, and Fanny helps him off to the little room to rest.

When they are gone Jack rises and tiptoes across the room to where Jimmy's coat hangs on the wall and quietly slips a gold coin into the frayed pocket and tiptoes back again.

Jimmy will wonder to-morrow how he came to overlook that coin before, but he will never dream how it came there.

Dear Jack!

Little Fanny soon returns, and together they sit by the cheerful fireside and talk very quietly. Jack appears in the new piece to-morrow.

Oh! how they hope he will succeed, how much it will mean for all of them! They will be together then, and never, never leave each other again; Fanny, Jack, and poor old Jimmy—won't they be happy!

No more heartaches, that is all past now; and Jimmy need never look for an engagement again; he will not need it, poor old soul.

Ah! little do they know the artist, little do they dream in the flush of their youthful years the hopeless yearning of the old man, who, tossing on his little couch near by, brokenly murmurs:

"Old, old, old!"

It is evening again. The lights of the great theatre shine brightly upon the twinkling snowflakes falling gently upon the merry, good-natured crowd that swarms the great thoroughfare. Carriages without number are discharging their brilliant occupants at the theatre door, and many are the bright and happy faces that crowd the entrance.

It is the first night of the new comedy, and all the "first nighters" are there ready to condemn or approve.

At the rear of the building a somewhat different scene presents itself. The snow is heaped high about the old stage door, the lonely gas lamp flickers dismally in the night wind, and the street is almost deserted.

Some happy faces pass this door too, but most of them are silent and grave. A great deal depends upon this night to them, success or ruin stares them in the face, and the little "servant girl" hums a comic song with a very serious countenance as she hurries in.

Then comes Jack. He is very hopeful, and tells his companion as they enter together that it is certain to be "the hit of his life."

Who is this old crouching figure that comes shuffling through the snow and hesitates as he reaches the door? Why, it's Jimmy. Yes, he has come to take a lesson from the younger generation.

Somehow he seems older to-night, just a little more bent, and perhaps there are a few, just a few, more lines about his dear face.

The curtain is up, the play is on. The audience is very quiet and ready at an instant to approve or to crush.

Jack's time has come; he begins; quickly the ice is broken. They are with him, and the house fairly rocks with laughter and applause. He has won them and stamped his name beside the glittering motto, "Success" upon the play.

What a happy little heart is fluttering joyfully in the dear little girl who looks at him from the front, with so many happy tears—her Jack!

The company is in ecstasies and the author rushes round the stage to greet our Jack as he leaves it.

But where is Jimmy? Ah, yes, there is, "Right proscenium entrance," squeezed in a little space where the gas man has kindly placed him and given him a little stool to sit on.

Can it be he is not laughing and cheering with the mad crowd so near him? It actually seems that there are tears in his eyes, or something very like them, and as he gazes through them it seems to Jimmy that another scene, a far different one, unrolls before him—a scene of long, long ago. The comedian is still there, but he doesn't look quite like Jack, but like someone Jimmy knew once. Why, bless me! it's Jimmy himself, and, yes, he can't be mistaken, round him are the old "boys and girls." Again comes floating on his ear the familiar strains of the old orchestra he knows so well, wafted to him from out of the realms of long ago. Again the laughter and applause are his and his alone, Fanny is with him now, how beautiful she looks; it is a great night for Jimmy, and why? because he is young. Dear, dear Fanny, how merciful, he thinks, that you will never grow old. Oh; the happiness which surrounds him, just plain Jimmy, but the greatest of them all——.

"Curtain."

Bang goes the gong and Jimmy rises with a start. Gone. All are gone. All the familiar faces he saw such a short time ago. He must have been dreaming, these are different faces that go laughing by him; but they are just as young and just as beautiful, and as Jimmy turns to go away he sees his own in the little glass nailed against the gas box, and Jimmy only says: "Old, old, old!"

Just a little more bent, just a little slower does he shuffle to the stage door. He stops a second and in the dim light of the flickering jet prints a reverent and respectful kiss on the spot where her name stands next to his, then slowly, without being missed, shuffles out, and the old stage door closes half-reluctantly upon him.

"Jack, the piece went splendidly, and it's you that did it; never saw such a hit since I've been in the business," and the manager grasps his hand.

And Jack—well Jack only sees visions of a very happy little home with a sweet girlish face ever near him, and a dear silvery-haired figure by the bright fireside. How happy they will be!

"By-the-way, old man," says the manager as he is leaving, "I'm not at all suited with the way Davis does that character old man part; think you'd better tell old Jimmy to come round at rehearsal to-morrow and I will give him a chance at the part."

Jack can only say, "God bless you!"

How happy they all are after the strain is over and they know all is well; the little "servant-girl" is laughing merrily, and they crowd about Jack as they all walk down the passageway together to the old stage door. The door swings open; they are about to step out, when something lying in the snow blocks their way. Jack stoops and lifts it.

"Jimmy!"

Yes, the curtain that has been rung down so many years has risen to the sweet strains of the old orchestra, and once again he is playing his part with the "old boys and girls."

CHARLES HARTMAN.

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THE FINAL WAR

BY

LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Shadow Hand," "An American Emperor," "The Lost Provinces," etc.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The Eagle Strangles the Bear.

It was no part of Admiral Mahan's scheme to leave his ships as stationary targets to be battered by the superior gun-fire of his opponent.

No sooner did the action commence than he promptly echeloned the fleet to the East, thus effectually using his broadsides and compelling the enemy to change front in order to bring his full force into play. The manœuvre had another and important effect.

The tide was now rapidly moving down Channel, and the United States vessels in their new position had the benefit of a strong current for the purposes of rapid movement and easier execution of tactics. Ship for ship and gun for gun, the Grand Duke ought to have won the battle, and, indeed, he began the affair with a light heart as to its issue, though he bitterly denounced the American commander for so thoroughly upsetting his plans.

But in one respect out of many the Russian had seriously underrated his foe. He had heard of, but never seen, the dynamite gun—a fearful weapon to the development of which the United States had given particular attention.

Their artillerists had succeeded in developing to perfection not only the propelling power of this well-known explosive, but also in utilising its eccentric qualities in bursting the missile itself.

Gunpowder or gun-cotton has a direct and measurable effect in a specific locality when exploded by the impact of a shell upon the object aimed at. It also seeks the least resisting avenue of outlet. Dynamite, on the other hand, is a variable force, and most frequently attacks with the greatest fury the point of utmost resistance.

The Russian ships soon bore witness of the demoniacal energy of this unexpected assailant.

Whilst the blows of some of the American shells did little more damage than was effected by the first shock—the resultant explosion passing away harmlessly or wrenching off some obstacle many feet distant from the place struck—the majority of effective projectiles did enormous damage, crushing 9-inch plates as though they were bonnet-boxes, tearing whole sections out of a barbette, smashing big guns out of their carriages, and, at times, wrenching huge lumps from the body of a ship

Such terrific freaks of the giant explosive quickly demoralised the Russian sailors, and the battle had not long progressed before Michaelovitch, Grand Duke, ordered all efforts to be concentrated upon torpedo and ram attack.

But by this time the United States Admiral had received highly valuable professional assistance.

When the fight began, David Jenkins, master of No. 51 Cardiff pilot boat, was standing in the bows of his smart little craft near the entrance to Penarth Dock. He knew that in the then state of the tide both friend and foe were in imminent danger of stranding during the rapid and often careless course of a manœuvre.

Now, David Jenkins was not cast in particularly heroic mould. He was short and stout and sailor-like, with a small vocabulary of common words but a rich stock of expletives in two languages. He yelled to his assistants to cast off from the buoy to which the *Polly Jenkins*—his wife's namesake—was moored, and run up the mainsail and topsail and haul in the jib.

In a word, Admiral Mahan wanted a pilot, and David Jenkins was going to him.

If you can conceive what a fierce naval engagement means, if you can picture a sea torn with projectiles big and little, alive with torpedoes, and swept with torrents of bullets from Maxims and small-arms, you will realise the Inferno through which the *Polly Jenkins* passed like a pantomime fairy among the demons—smiling and untouched—during the next few minutes.

And what a roar went up from Penarth Head, from the masts of ships in the docks, from the balconies of such buildings as commanded a sea view, when the people understood David Jenkins' motive and saw him clamber up a rope thrown to him over the side of the *Minneapolis*, whilst a shell sent the smart *Polly Jenkins* to the bottom of the sea an instant later.

David coolly turned to help his mates, both of whom were saved, and then made his way to the conning-tower of the *Minneapolis*, where he found the Admiral.

When he heard the pilot's mission, Admiral Mahan gripped his hand for reply. In five minutes the effect of David Jenkins' presence was felt. Two Russian battleships were stuck in the East Mud, and a cruiser was aground on a shoal off Penarth.

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The fight lasted exactly three-quarters of an hour. At the end of that time two Russian battleships and four cruisers were sunk, their tops being only visible above the water, three were ashore, four others, mere wrecks, had struck their colours, and the seven remaining vessels, including the *Kronstadt*, were hurrying down Channel, to return that evening in the safe keeping of Admiral Erskine.

Three United States ships had gone down, and four vessels had to be rapidly beached on the West Mud to prevent them from sinking in deep water.

The American ambassador, amazed and angered beyond expression, had travelled down from London in a special train in less than three hours.

Lord Wolseley had asked the Great Western Railway authorities to expedite him even to the detriment of the movements of troops. At 4.30 p.m. he was at the pier-head; at five o'clock he stood on the quarter-deck of the *Minneapolis*.

In the first choking rush of his astounded indignation he demanded and received the Admiral's sword.

But he was a man and an American. As he gazed round and saw the havoc of the fight, with its glorious testimonies of a superb victory, his right hand instinctively tightened on the hilt of the sword, and there was a suspicious weakness, almost a tenderness, in his voice as he said: "Why have you done this thing?"

"Couldn't help it, your Excellency," replied Mahan. "Michaelovitch wouldn't allow our merchantmen to finish loading, and he was confoundedly impudent about it, too. It was a real lovely fight."

"How many did you—that is, I mean, what explanation have you for attacking a neutral power?"

"Here's the documents of the case," said the Admiral, somewhat sheepishly producing a little scrap of paper, the memorandum made by the lieutenant at the shipping office.

The Ambassador pretended to examine it carefully, but he could not help giving a comprehensive glance round as he turned to lay the sword and its slings against the breech of a grimy and blood-bespattered gun.

"How many ships have you lost?" he said after a pause.

"Three," said the admiral, "and four on shore."

"This is appalling. And the enemy—at least, I mean, of course, the Russians?"

"Six sunk, three ashore, four taken, and seven had enough. They quit."

"And—er—how—er, I suppose I am justified in asking. How did our men behave?"

"I know a bit about fighting at sea—theoretically," replied the author of the "Influence of Sea Power upon History," with the modest pride of conscious knowledge, "and I may honestly say that I have never heard of a combat in which coolness, courage, efficiency, and daring exploit were more magnificently exhibited than by the United States fleet which I have had the supreme honour to command to-day. You should have seen," he continued, warming to his subject, whilst the diplomatist's face flushed as he listened, "you should have seen the *Chicago* tackle an armoured battleship twice her size, rattle her ribs with quick-firing guns, sweep her decks with Maxims, shrapnel, and bullets, minimising the effect of the enemy's big batteries by sheer dexterity of handling, and finally sinking her with a torpedo. It was superb; it was worth living for and dying for, ten times over."

"I came here at sixty miles an hour," burst forth the Ambassador; "but you couldn't wait, I sup——" Then finding the Admiral's eye upon him, he corrected himself stiffly: "There is no use in continuing this absolutely distressing conversation. You must consider yourself a prisoner until I have communicated with Washington." He walked away to the side of the ship and murmured: "My poor friend, what will be the end of this?"

The Ambassador and the Admiral gazed at each other in silence.

Admiral Mahan, pallid but firm, glanced round at his ship and her noble consorts, as though to take leave of them for ever, when a slight commotion at the companion-ladder attracted the attention of both gentlemen.

"I tell you," said a resolute English voice, "I must see the Ambassador himself." Accompanying the words, a tall, active man in civilian attire gained the level of the quarter-deck.

Advancing to the American Minister, he bowed and explained his presence:

"I am the telegraph master at Cardiff, your Excellency, and a message has just arrived from the Embassy of such exceeding importance that I resolved to deliver it myself."

The Ambassador opened the envelope, read its inclosure through twice with growing amazement, ran the fingers of his right hand into his hair beneath his hat, and silently indicated to Mahan that he was to read the telegram.

And this is what the sailor read: "London, 4.50 p.m. Following is exact text of cable just received: 'Washington, 11.4 a.m. President yesterday received confirmation of your reported rumour that Russia was about to declare war against England. Special meetings of Cabinet and Congress were at once held, and it was unanimously resolved that the United States should demand from Russia unconditional withdrawal of declaration of war. At 10.30 this morning Russian Ambassador announced emphatic refusal of the Tsar to comply with our ultimatum. At 11 a.m., President with unanimous approval of Senate and Congress, declared war against Russia, Germany, and France, as the ally of England. Take measures accordingly. Further instructions by cable later.—OLNEY.' End of message.—WHITE, secretary."

For fully half a minute the Ambassador and the Admiral gazed at each other in silence.

The sailor was the first to partially recover his self-possession.

"This cable," he said slowly, as though thinking hard, "is timed 11.5 a.m."

"Yes," gasped the Minister.

"And the United States declared war against Russia at 11 a.m.—the time recorded here?"

"That's so."

"And I fought and whipped the Grand Duke what's-his-name, commencing at 1 p.m. sharp, winding up the ball about 1.45."

Again there was a pause.

Slowly a smile of complete happiness spread over the face of the Ambassador.

Then he went to the place where he had deposited the Admiral's sword and it's trappings, picked them up, and handed them to Mahan, and calmly remarked with a delicious yankee drawl:

"Say, I guess you'll want these."

Admiral Mahan quietly buckled the belt round his waist, for he dared not give expression to his feelings lest he should break down like a woman.

But the astute diplomat, quick to control his moods and impulses, saved the situation.

"Come," he cried, linking his arm through that of his companion. "I am simply dying to hear all about the row."

The one thing they did not discuss was the fact that Washington time is six hours behind that of Greenwich.

* * * * * *

Those hundred thousand British soldiers came in useful at Cardiff after all.

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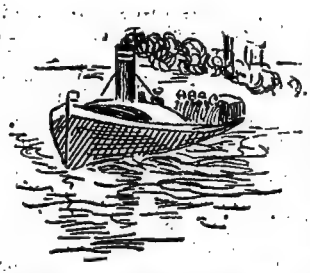


He had gone down the harbour in his fast steam-launch.

Major Ramsdale "put up" a considerable portion of the German coal-shipper's anticipated cheque in securing huge stores of champagne and bottled beer for the particular use of the army and navy that night.

But, in the first place, with thoughtful care, he called for volunteers among the householders of the town to receive and tend the wounded, irrespective of race.

It was some hours before Admiral Mahan was able to make the requisite dispositions for the safety and comfort of his shattered fleet and the captured ships. By that time Erskine had arrived in the roads, and the two commanders soon exchanged news and greetings.

Late in the evening they and their principal officers—for the American Minister was compelled to hasten back to London—attended a grand banquet in the Town Hall, whilst the British troops lined the long road leading from the Docks and chief thoroughfare, St. Mary Street, in which the Municipal buildings are situated.

The jubilant enthusiasm of the inhabitants of the Welsh metropolis manifested itself in every possible way. Hardly a living soul in Cardiff went to bed that night.

At the banquet in the Town Hall the Marquis of Bute made a brief speech, but it contained good matter. He undertook, at his own cost, to float, dry dock, and repair the stranded American ships—a truly magnificent offer—and tremendous cheering took place when the Mayor read a telegram he received from the House of Commons to the effect that Parliament had voted the thanks of the nation and a sword of honour to Admiral Mahan for his brilliant services to the United States and to England.

Next day the gallant American was handed by a Queen's messenger an autograph letter from her Majesty, conveying her personal appreciation of the victory he had achieved, and stating that her Majesty would seek the sanction of the President to her desire to confer upon the Admiral a Grand Commandership of the Order of the Bath.

Much comment had also been evoked throughout the United Kingdom by the patriotic behaviour of the Mayor during the crisis, and the national sentiment was fully expressed when he subsequently became Sir Joseph Ramsdale, K.C.B.

Throughout all this rejoicing there was but one slight note of solitary discontent, which found voice in the public utterance of a Swansea town councillor: "Whenever there is a chance of advertisement Cardiff gets it. Even the Russian fleet passed us by."

CHAPTER XXV.

Under the Southern Cross.

Whilst Canada was equipping her sons to constitute an Army Corps of 100,000 men to be forwarded in detachments of 20,000 each to the assistance of England, and South Africa was gathering 30,000 colonists for the same laudable purpose, Australia, brimful of loyalty and courage, and anxious to make even greater efforts, was cruelly doomed to doubt and uncertainty.

The cable-cutting tactics of the initial stage of the war had the effect of completely isolating the island continent and New Zealand from the rest of the world.

Great as had been the exertions of the submarine telegraph repairing ships employed by the various cable companies, they were not able to touch the South Atlantic and Pacific lines until towards the end of May, and the first news that reached this country concerning Australasia showed that whilst the lion had been using both teeth and claws, his cubs were equally ready to tear things when the time came.

Sydney had been attacked on May 17th and succeeding days by the hired Japanese fleet, strengthened by four French and German Cruisers.

As the result of several conferences, inspired by the patriotic idea that the needs of Australia as a whole must be considered, and not the requirements of a section, the territorial forces of New South Wales, Victoria, and Queensland, were admirably organised.

An efficient scheme of Federal Defence had been devised by Major-General Hutton, Major-General Sir C. H. Smith, and Brigadier-General Gunter, the respective commandants of the colonial divisions. The local fleet, such as it was, was concentrated at Melbourne, this being the point likely to be first attacked, as the naval armament was far too weak to be split up into sections.

Sydney Harbour—that superb landlocked retreat which is unequalled throughout the world for beauty and perfect design—could be adequately protected, it was felt, by modern fortifications, mines, and torpedoes. Unfortunately this was the last and incompleted item in the list of Colonial defences. The forts were not built, the mines not laid, nor the torpedoes in store.

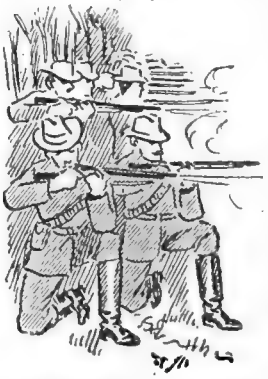
And it was the capital of New South Wales that the enemy first attacked.

Little news had reached the Colonies of the progress of events in Europe, yet such as came was terrible enough. The combatants were known, as was the failure of the attempt of the allies to invade England.

Then a fast steamer from Colombo brought tidings of the storming of Havre and Stralsund, the seafight at Gibraltar, and the heroic manner in which the Mother Country was grappling with her foes.

At once the pent-up excitement of the Australians rose to fever heat, and had there been ships enough available a strong army would have embarked for England within a week.

Preparations were immediately made with this object in view, when transports could be secured, and it was in the midst of the enthusiasm evoked by the project that the intelligence came like a thunde clap of the bombardment of Sydney by a powerful fleet of eighteen ironclads and cruisers.



A murderous fire .... rained upon the boats.

The first impulse of the Melbourne authorities was to send the local flotilla to the assistance of the sister city, but Major-General Hutton quickly wired to show the futility of this proposal.

"It would be useless," he telegraphed. "Six of these ships could blow all of ours out of the water in ten minutes. They are of the most powerful and latest type, and we would simply lose our ships to benefit the enemy. We cannot help our town being battered to pieces, but if these scoundrels, whom we believe to be Japanese for the most part, set foot on shore, we will only be too glad, as they will not require their ships again. Meanwhile we are doing our best with improvised shore batteries."

To his very considerable chagrin Rear-Admiral Cyprian A. G. Bridge, of the *Orlando*, flagship of the Australian Fleet, was compelled to admit that the soldier was right.

But the *Orlando*, *Katoomba*, *Mildur*, *Pylades*, and *Ringarooma* did visit Sydney Harbour whilst the enemy was there—a little later.

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So well had the enemy's *coup* been planned that the first man to be aware of something unusual taking place was the Collector of Customs at Sydney, Mr. James Powell. He had gone down the harbour in his fast steam-launch during the early morning of the 17th for the purpose of inspecting a new revenue cutter which was stationed at the entrance to Port Jackson, when the master of his little craft called his attention to a fleet of warships some ten miles out at sea, steaming rapidly towards the harbour.

The sailor at once assured Mr. Powell that they in no way resembled the Australasian contingent, and the Collector deemed it best to return as quickly as possible to Sydney and inform the authorities.

The hour was an awkward one, but by utilising many messengers in cabs he soon succeeded in arousing the Governor, the Premier, the Hon G. H. Reid, Major General Hutton, and the commandants of local volunteer corps.

They all hastened to the Custom-house, and by this time messages from advanced signal stations began to arrive.

At last one definite statement came to hand. "There are six battleships and twelve cruisers, some of the latter possibly large gunboats, and the leading ship has just hoisted German and French colours," reported the light-house keeper, who sent the message by telephone.

For a moment none spoke. Then Mr. Reid said solemnly: "Gentlemen, our hour of trial is at hand. Let us each and all do our duty as best we may."

Major-General Hutton turned to Mr. Powell:

"I may use your staff?" he inquired.

"Let me be the first to serve your purposes," replied the Collector.

With remarkable calmness the soldier gave definite instructions to each of the officers present, and then sent off messenger after messenger, every man having his well-defined errand to fulfil, and a clear understanding of its purport should other measures be necessary to attain it than those which the general anticipated.

By nine o'clock, when the allied fleet brought to opposite Sydney, every battery in existence in the harbour was well manned, and some 3,000 troops were under arms in the town.

A German officer, by virtue of seniority, commanded the expedition, and he promptly sent an envoy ashore to demand the unconditional surrender of the city and colony to the Emperor of Germany and the French Republic, and the immediate disarmament of all troops under the control of the Governor.

He never heard the answer, as the moment his representative reached the side of the flagship on his return, every available gun on shore poured in a galling fire upon the warships.

As the gunners had plenty of time to train their weapons and test their range calculations, the resultant execution was marvellous; indeed, during the whole war no such weight of metal inflicted similar loss upon an opponent.

But the jubilation of Sydney at this small score was brief-lived.

The comparatively feeble defences of the port were trivial in the extreme compared with the floating destroyers within short range, and although the shooting of the Japs was not improved by the salute they had received, they quickly showed what numbers and scientific direction could effect.

It was no part of the allies' programme to destroy Sydney itself. They had come to capture Australia, not to ruin its great centres of commerce, so their fire was steadily directed towards silencing the batteries on land.

This they soon effected. It was simply impossible for such a one-sided duel to continue, and in an hour's time there was no responsive cannonading from the shore. The batteries were heaps of ruins, their guns dismantled, and their occupants for the most part killed or wounded.

Nevertheless they had stung the allies. A gunboat had gone down, and a French cruiser sank during the afternoon.

The Frenchman only became more choleric.

But the aspect of affairs changed when the German Commander-in-Chief ordered a strong storming party to effect a landing. Sydney Harbour is wooded down to the water's edge, save where the docks and wharves are situated. From every point of vantage, from every little patch of cover, a murderous fire from the Lee-Metfords, with which the Colonial troops were armed, rained upon the boats and rendered it simply suicidal for them to attempt to advance.

So the landing was abandoned for the time.

A lull now occurred in the fighting, and it was at this moment that a telegram arrived from Melbourne that chased away some of the pallor from the Governor's face and caused General Hutton to proceed with his defensive operations with renewed vigour.

Throughout the afternoon the enemy contented himself with vigorously shelling every spot where troops might find cover, and at last the early darkness of winter wrapped friend and foe in impenetrable gloom.

There were no lights visible either ashore or afloat; but the English Commander had already made every disposition to crowd all available troops—they were now pouring into the town by rail from the interior—upon the localities most likely to be the scene of a night attack.

At the same time field artillery was being hastily mounted in masked batteries for the purpose of amusing the enemy at daybreak.

Shortly after midnight the search-lights of the fleet suddenly flared upon the Custom House quay and the principal ferryboat pier. At the same moment a vast flotilla of boats came shooting out of the blackness; a well-planned attempt to land was being made at both points.

It was quite useless. A detachment of French marines did manage to reach the shore, but they were cut down to a man by a volunteer company, every member of which had served in the Soudan, whilst the European officers vainly strove to induce the Japanese sailors to face the music in front.

"Chinee-man plenty run; foreign devil too much fightee," said the devotees of the lotus and the lily. This affair in no way resembled the taking of Port Arthur.

"It is like their infernal impudence," said a youthful and very swaggering mounted infantry officer, "to send a lot of beastly black fellows to tackle Australia."

"But they're not black, they're yaller," replied the man to whom he spoke.

"It's the same thing. They're all niggers together." And of such is the ethnology of the Englishman who recks not of Exeter Hall or the DAILY NEWS.

Morning dawned with clouds of mist rolling up the harbour. Nothing could have better suited the purposes of the defence.

The black hulls of the warships, looming through the uncertain light, offered a fair target, whilst the gunners afloat could not readily distinguish the hidden batteries whence there belched forth such a continuous stream of diminutive but frightfully disconcerting missiles.

There was nothing for it but a change of location, and the allied fleet moved down the harbour out of range, leaving two more gunboats resting safely on the bottom.

A strong wind sprung up towards noon. It quickly drove away the mist, and the fleet returned to take their revenge upon the batteries, but these were now silent, and it was difficult work to discover their whereabouts.

Needless to say, the German admiral was greatly per-

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plexed. He had the stronger force, but he could not bring it to bear. He could lay the town in ruins in half-an-hour, but this was simply damaging his own property, so to speak, as Australia could not hope to hold out against the united powers. He would play a waiting game, and simply blockade the port, knowing full well that the course of events would bring the Colonials to their senses.

So he anchored his ships at a safe distance from those spiteful little twelve-pounders, and strove to repair damages.

But on the fourth morning the people of Sydney began to pour forth in continuous streams towards every bluff and promontory that commanded a full view of the lowering warships, and waited patiently for some few hours for something to happen.

And something did happen, shortly after twelve o'clock, something that caused tremendous commotion and signalling, and blowing of trumpets and passing to and fro of steam launches among the allied fleet.

For at that hour there swept into the harbour, in the keen bright sunshine of a fine cold-weather day, nineteen English ships.

Admiral Fremantle was in front, with his flag flying on board the *Centurion*, and with him were H.M. ships *Edgar, Æolus, Mercury, Peacock, Pigmy, Pique, Plover, Porpoise, Rainbow, Redbreast, Redpole, Spartan, Unlaunted,* and the five vessels of the Australian fleet already mentioned.

A council of war was being held on board the *Unser Fritz* at the moment this astounding sight burst upon the gaze of the allies. Although the German Admiral promptly gave orders to prepare for action, he unhesitatingly uttered his opinion that it was their humane duty to yield, as they were wholly unable to cope with their unexpected assailants.

Sirdar Mahomed Khan.

They were short of coal, ammunition was not too plentiful, their ships were more or less damaged, they had lost a lot of men, and the majority of their crews could not be depended upon against British sailors.

"The devil is in league with England," he concluded, "and we can only recognise the fact."

But his junior French colleague strongly urged the necessity for fighting. Many of the British ships were small, luck might favour the allies, and, above all, it was dishonourable to their flags to capitulate without striking a blow.

Opinions at the board were evenly divided, irrespective of nationality, the saner men recognising the hopelessness of the situation.

The Frenchman only became more choleric.

"Messieurs," he shrieked, "this is the language of poltroons and cowards!"

Several officers angrily protested, but the Admiral took the quarrel upon himself.

"One of us two must decide," he said. "I am no coward, thank God, and I love my country more than my life; but this matter must be settled now, this instant. Bring me a loaded and an unloaded revolver," he went on, turning to a young commander near him, "and place them on the table under a covering of any sort."

The officer soon obeyed the order, whilst, amidst dead silence, those near the starboard port-holes could see the British fleet, some two miles away, deploying for attack formation.

"Here, sir," said the German to his *confrère*, with the utmost *sang froid*, "choose your weapon and fire at my heart. If I fall you will command the fleet."

The French officer, slightly unnerved by the man's stolid demeanour, but still burning with the shame of the

"Have you heard the news?"

threatened surrender, saw no solution of the difficulty other than that proposed by his superior.

He advanced to the table, hurriedly withdrew one of the weapons, placed it close to the Admiral's breast and pulled the trigger.

A sharp click showed that it was empty. He flushed, threw the revolver on the floor, smiled with rare self-possession, and stood at attention to meet his fate.

The German also smiled. "You do not exist, my friend," he said, and walked out of the cabin towards the deck to order a flag of truce to be instantly exhibited.

Admiral Fremantle said some earnest words, never, or hardly ever, used in the Queen's Navy, when he saw the signal.

He knew exactly what it portended, and it was too bad to have come here all the way from the China seas and not have a fight at the finish.

"Signal," he roared in a perfect fury, "that I will only listen to unconditional surrender."

"*Ach, Himmel!*" said the German when the message had been translated. "I accept!"

Then young Australia stood upon his head and did all sorts of ridiculous things before he packed himself on board the two fleets and started for Vancouver, whence he was sent across Canada by rail, other batches of him travelling by passenger-steamers to Cape Town and Portsmouth.

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CHAPTER XXVI.

Sirdar Mahomed Khan—and Others.

Let us take a good look at the man as he walks with easy stride and erect figure across the *maidan** at Bareilly.

He carries his fifty-seven years lightly does this Mahommedan swash-buckler, for he is a hardy descendant of a race of soldiers who prayed unceasingly to Allah that they might not die in their beds. Allah, assisted by the British Government, saw to it that their petition was granted in as many cases as possible, and this particular Mahomed Khan, though he knew he should never be killed in battle—how he came by the knowledge may perhaps be told some day—yet cherished the hope that his fate might come suddenly to him on parade.

He longed to leap into the Mahommedan paradise from off a horse's back.

His full name and title are "Rissalder Major Mahomed Khan, Sirdar Bahadur," which, being interpreted, means that the first two words show him to be the chief native officer of his regiment, the next pair represent his family names, and the concluding sonorous appellations signify that twice in his life the Government of India had delighted to honour him, once they dubbed him "Bahadur," or "honourable," and again when they said he should be called "Sirdar" or "chief" among Bahadurs, these being respectively the 2nd and 1st classes of the Order of British India.

He is a remarkable man is Sirdar Mahomed Khan, and he looks it.

He is six feet in height, strong, wiry, and straight as an ash-plant, without an ounce of superfluous flesh on his bones. His firm mouth and chin, his slightly hooked but well-shaped nose, his red-black eyes that can seem so kind or

* Parade ground or plain.

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fierce, according to his mood, his long curled moustaches and small iron-grey bushy whiskers, all bespeak the Punjabi warrior, whilst many years of command and responsibility have lent a fine air of placid dignity to his expression.

The Sirdar, as he is familiarly known in the regiment, is treated with courtly respect by the Colonel commanding, and the latest joined squadron officer regards him with deferential awe.

For Mahomed Khan has a great reputation. He has six medals, mostly with clasps, and the Order of Merit, third, class, upon his breast, and it is a regimental tradition that had not both the Colonel and Major been killed at Maiwand, their personal recommendations would have converted, the last decoration into C.S.I.

In his tight-fitting blue frock coat, with its sky-blue facings, his well-cut riding breeches of Kharki cloth, his big black boots with their jingling spurs, and his gigantic turban and sash, both resembling a bright-coloured Scottish plaid in pattern, the Sirdar looked every inch a soldier. More than one lady in the station described him as a "handsome old gentleman," which was a very great compliment for a nativeto receive from an Anglo-Indian mem-sahib.

In the centre of the parade-ground Mahomed Khan met the C.O., Lieut.-Col. F.C.Burton, who was leisurely cantering his Arab pony towards the orderly-room, where he wished to transact some business before the heat of a May morning at seven o'clock rendered clerical work intolerable.

On seeing the native officer the Englishman checked his pony, and, after acknowledging Mahomed Khan's salute, said: "Good morning, Rissaldar-Major. Have you heard the news?"

"No, sahib," was the answer, both, of course, speaking Urdu, the most generally used language in Hindustan.

"Well, there is nothing quite settled yet, but we move soon."

"To Egypt again, sahib, or to Belait?" *

"No," replied the C. O. with a smile, "we won't cross the *Kala Pali* † this time."

"But, sahib," exclaimed Mahomed Khan with astonishment, "who is there to fight here? You do not use an elephant to break eggs. What is there to trouble us here but hill men?"

"What is there beyond the hills?" said the Colonel quizzically, and regarding his favourite native officer with kindly good humour.

The Sirdar became very earnestly excited at the question which met his own. Looking cautiously around he lowered his voice, and said with eager utterance and gesture.

"Can it be, sahib, that I shall live to see Penjdeh avenged —that I shall cleave the Cossack to the chin on his own desert?" And as Colonel Burton nodded the old man smote his breast and cried: "By the beard of the prophet, let me live beyond that day and I care not for anything else. I will say: 'It is finished.' They may bury me among women or say that my father—may his bones rest—was a Bengali."

"No man could lie so greatly, Rissaldar-Major," laughed the Colonel as he shook the reins upon his Arab's neck. "Meanwhile, it is soon to talk of these things in the bazaar." And with this well-understood hint to keep the information to himself Mahomed Khan was left to walk on air towards the lines.

That morning the recruits found him unusually gracious. He actually said that they would make decent sowars‡ after they had gone through a campaign.

* * * * * *

The excited elation manifested by Sirdar Mahomed Khan was typical of the feelings of the entire British and native army in India, when it became known that at last there was a prospect of active service.

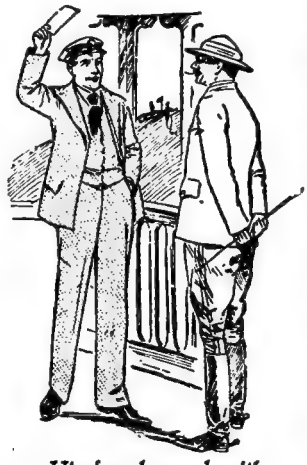
The fury and indignation of the British Tommy at being kept "stewin' and fattenin' on the bloomin' plains," as he expressed it, while his home battalion was carving up Frenchmen and Germans, nearly passed all limits.

The native troops were in a state of mild wonderment that nothing was being done, but, in their case "the sahib said so, and the sahib is always right."

Tommy Atkins, however, had no such gracious belief in infallibility of his officers to yield him philosophical comfort. He included the War Office, the Government, the Commanders-in-Chief at home and in India, and the authorities at Simla in one mighty and euphonious condemnation, and it was only his absolute inability to do anything but growl and drink more beer than usual that kept him from open insubordination.

The days came and went and passed into weeks, yet was there no sign, save tremendous activity in the departmental offices and the utmost medical solicitude for the care of the soldiers' health.

Long before the outbreak of the war the Commander-in-Chief had demanded and obtained from the Viceroy's Council the complete abrogation of stupid cantonment regulations ordained by home ministries in obedience to the threats of fanatical adherents, and the result was that the Indian Army was in a magnificent state of preparedness, and the percentage of sick had decreased to nearly vanishing point.



His face beamed with delight.

Such was the condition of British India when Lieutenant Rodney arrived at Bombay in the *Hornet*.

When he reached Aden the Political President deemed it expedient to request the chief naval officer at that station to send Rodney on special duty to Simla, in order that the Government of India might learn the fullest details concerning the state of affairs in Europe, as they had been so similarly cut off from all communications from Whitehall.

Having reported himself to Rear-Admiral Drummond, whose flag was flying on the cruiser *Bonadventure*, and received confirmation of the orders provisionally given to him at Aden, Rodney lost no time in starting upon his trying journey to Elysium, as the summer headquarters of the Indian Government is ironically termed by Anglo-India.

Here, after a conference with the Foreign Minister and the Military Member of Council, the sailor was ultimately honoured by a long conversation with the Viceroy himself.

He told his story in simple, straightforward language, and having soon narrated the absolute facts known to him, was encouraged to give his opinions as to the ultimate course of events, views which were soon to be proved remarkably sound and far-seeing when the telegraph got to work again.

Lord Elgin took a great liking for the handsome, open-hearted naval officer, who was not sufficiently aware of the tremendous importance of the Viceroy and Governor-General to be otherwise than outspoken and unaffected in his presence.

He brought with him a breezy wholesome air of belief in himself and his aspirations which was a relief to his lordship after the guarded and politic attitude of most of the high officials with whom he was surrounded, for even the boldest spirits in the Government of India are often trammelled by considerations of expediency.

* This is the general native term for England and Europe.
† Literally "black water" or sea.
‡ Troopers.

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Rodney quickly took to the manners and methods of the hills, and thoroughly enjoyed the Anglo-Indian *vie intime*.

But he was constantly harassed by the thought that after his one quick dash from Malta to the East he was apparently condemned to comparative idleness during the rest of the war, for the East-Indian squadron was mostly composed of ships vastly more dangerous to their occupants than to an enemy, even if there was a remote probability of a foe putting in an appearance at sea.

When, therefore, he was invited to dinner at Government House on the night that the rumour spread of Russia being a possible ally of the French and Germans, Rodney suddenly hated the ease and luxury and careless abandonment of S mla existence.

At the conclusion of the meal the Viceroy rallied him on account of his unusual gravity, and Frank at once owned the cause.

"It seems to me," he concluded, "that the faster I steamed through the Mediterranean the more quickly I was leaving behind me all chance of further employment."

He looked so glum that Lord Elgin smiled.

"Cheer up," he said. "I will endeavour to put things right for you."

Next day Rodney received a telegram from Rear-Admiral Drummond informing him of his appointment, with the relative rank of commander, as second in command of a small body of sailors and marines detailed for field duty with the Indian Army. He was to hold himself in readiness to join the force at Quetta when ordered.

His face beamed with delight at the message, and his hilarity was so marked at the club that a Staff Corps major asked him what was the matter. Had he bought the winner of the day's hurdle-race at the overnight lottery?

Rodney explained, and also expressed his gratitude for Lord Elgin's obvious and kindly aid.

"Do you mean to say," cried the other, "that you yourself put up the Viceroy to work the business for you?"

"Not exactly," said Rodney, "but I growled about the aspect of things, and he promised to fix them up a bit."

"Well, you are a cool chap and no mistake," said the Staff Corps man.

From that day forth he regarded the sailor as a past-master in the art of getting influence to work in the right quarter, and often told the story to youthful and envious wing officers who tremblingly hoped for a cantonment magistracy or a berth in the "politicals."

* * * * *

Karachi, with its burning sands and gaping crocodiles piled together in sacred tanks, is a cheerless place enough in the hot weather.

There as elsewhere between the Hindoo Khoosh range and Adam's Bridge, the sun suffuses the sky with its burnished copper-hued rays during twelve long hours of the day, and the 1st Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers did not like the merry month of May any better because of the news which came crowding fast over the lately restored cables.

Inaction is always bad enough during the hot weather, but inaction for the Indian Army whilst the home battalions were carving fame and promotion out of huge masses of Continental troops was one of hose things, as the Adjutant put it, which brings a well-trained regiment down to the level of the depôt.

And Lieutenant T. R. Mallock was a very smart adjutant indeed. He had many mysterious figures and letters bracketed after his name in the "Army List," showing that he was qualified to instruct other people in almost every branch of military knowledge, so when he said that this absurd hesitation on the part of the War Office to utilise the Indian Army was "demoralising," even the C.O. sighed deeply.

At last, about May 21st, when the usual wagging of heads about the anniversary of the Mutiny had ceased, and portentious prophets of native disturbances had buried their reminiscences for another year, there shot through the length and breadth of India one of those mysterious electrical thrills which so invariably forbode great events through the ordinary sources.

No man has ever discovered the why or the wherefore of this curious and indefinite foreshadowing of dramatic intelligence, but that it actually exists is a fact so patent to every Anglo-Indian, that it cannot be disputed.

Arising in native circles, it quickly travels through the Eurasian community, and thence to the English officials, to whom it is often a guide and a warning.

And now this awesome, imponderable, and immeasurable medium, made known to the people of India that stirring times were at hand.

Mad, wild, improbable stories were told to wondering natives in the bazaar; servants in European houses asked their sahibs if they had heard of the foolish sayings of the *moullahs* and *rakis*, the Mussulman priests and Hindu mediciants who batten upon the credulity of their religious adherents; and the wives and families of railway officials resident in out-of-the-way places suddenly discovered that they had pressing business at the nearest station where there was a British cantonment.

On May 24th the murder was out. Russia had declared war, and the entire Indian Army, British and native, was to take the field at once.

A well set-up and bronzed veteran, with badges on his arm showing fifteen years' service, was gulping down Murree beer in the canteen of the 7th when the news arrived.

The younger men around him were wildly excited and still more wildly speculative—one, who came out from home with the January draft, was pessimistic.

"We can do nothing," he said, "with the canal blown up, unless we land in England and march through Armenia, which will be a tough job."

"What do you know about it, rooky?" interrupted the old soldier, with a glance of calm scorn at the youthful exponent of the art of war.

"Well," said the other, somewhat abashed, "we surely won't content ourselves with seizing the Pamirs!"

"The Pamirs, you Johnnie," snarled the other, who was deeply versed in the gospel according to the *Pioneer*, "a regiment of wild goats couldn't advance throug the Pamirs. They'd be eaten by the garrison at Gilgit."

"Then what shall we do?" cried the novice, forced to confess his ignorance of the situation.

The veteran took a copious draught of the beer, and drew his *kharki* sleeve across his mouth before he replied:

"There is only one way to attack Russia, and that is the road she'd follow if she attacked us. What for did we build the Sibi-Quetta Railway? If you was to fire a cannon-ball through the Khojak tunnel, and it kept its line, where would it hit?"

He gazed triumphantly round, but the Royal Fusiliers were not strong in geography.

"The North Pole," hazarded one at length.

At other times the remark would have created a laugh, but this subject was too serious for levity.

The humourist had to pay for two gallons of "boozo" to avoid being held down and belted.

"Herat is the gate of India, my boys," said the veteran oracularly, "an' it's through that bloomin' gate we'll be marchin' shortly, or my name's not Billy Watson."

And Billy Watson had no reason to change the name he had received thirty-five years earlier at St. George's-in-the-East, though a good many of the Royal Fusiliers took a longer journey by another and more shadowy gate than that of Herat before the Indian Army crossed the valley of the Helmund.

(To be continued.)

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PLAIN SPEAKING.

Creepy-crawly writes: "We are taught that there is a use for everything, but can you tell me what use there is for wasps?"———Even wasps have their good points, for they are the most inveterate enemies of flies. One wasp has been known to kill nearly a thousand flies a day.

G. P. asks: "Has the Queen ever attended Parliament?"———Curiously enough, Queen Victoria has never seen her faithful Commons in session. Her Majesty could, indeed, be an observed spectator of the House of Commons at work if she sat behind the grill of the ladies' gallery, but this would not be consistent with the dignity of her Majesty.

F. L. H.—"The Roof of the World" is the Chang plateau, which lies north of and runs nearly parallel to the head waters of the Western Brahmapootra, or Sango.

It occurred to H. N. T. the other day that it would be a good idea if we could have sea and mountain air supplied to us in our homes by means of pipes, similar to the way in which we now obtain our water and gas. He asks whether it could be carried out.———Although the idea of being able to command a delightful seabreeze or, if preferred, a blow from the mountains, as easily as we now obtain our hot and cold water, by merely turning on a tap, is a distinctly refreshing one, I am afraid there are too many difficulties in the way to make it feasible. For instance, the pipes and pumping plant would be a heavy initial expense, and, what is more, it would not be the chief difficulty to contend with. Air keeps very badly, and it would be no good having compressed reservoirs like great gasomete s, for, after a short sojourn in such a receptacle, the breezes would lose all their valuable properties.

C. E. S., a signalman on H.M.S. *Centurion* on the China Station writes: "Will you kindly tell me the quickest time a letter has taken to go from London to any port in Australia, to settle an argument?"——— I have made inquiry, and find that twenty-nine days is the shortest time, and that the port is Perth, West Australia. Melbourne comes next with thirty-one days, sixteen hours.

W. M.—Antipyrin, the well-known remedy for headaches, is a product of coal tar, and is the subject of a German patent.

M. C.—The mud volcano is a feature of the Yellowstone Park. Instead of lava, it emits liquid mud. Everything within forty feet is caked with mud. No, there is nothing exactly like it in this country, because the mud volcano is gifted with an odour stronger than that of over-ripe eggs; but omitting the odour, we have a very good imitation of the mud volcano in our large wood-paved thoroughfares on a wet day. You have only to stand on the kerb for five minutes, and your appearance will be much like that of the ground about the volcano.

L. W.—The Lord Chancellor of England, on retiring from office, has a pension of £5,000 a year, whether his term of office has been long or short.

M. L. asks: "When were the female parts in plays first acted by women in England?"———The first English actress appears to be Mrs. Coleman, who played in one of Davenant's productions in 1656. In 1662 we find these words in a license for a new theatre: "Whereas the women's parts in plays have hitherto been acted by men in the habits of women, at which some have taken offence, we do permit and give leave for the time to come that all women's parts be acted by women." In the time of Shakespeare the female parts were always acted by boys. Coryat, in a book published in 1611, regarding a stay in Venice, mentions that he saw woman acting on the stage, "which I never saw before."

G. P. S.—From calculations made, it has been computed that, for the last ten years, the average annual expenditure in Italy of American tourists has been about seven million sterling.

Miner.—The first man who discovered gold in Australia was hanged for his pains. He was one of the first convicts transported to Botany Bay. On discovering the secret, he took a sample of the mineral to Governor Phillip to prove his statements, and, instead of getting the reward he expected, he was promptly hanged for attempted escape, and to prevent the discovery from becoming generally known.

W. M. propounds the following. "Is it true that two conflicting sounds produce silence?" ——Sir John Herschel stated that "it has been found that two conflicting sounds produce silence, as two converging rays of light produce darkness." You may, therefore, take it as a scientific truth; but it doesn't always work out like that in practice. The other day there were two conflicting sounds in Henrietta Street; one proceeded from a trombone, the other from a donkey. One performer started during a brief pause, in the music of the other, and I devoutly hoped that the two conflicting sounds would produce silence. But they didn't. Two others conflicting sounds were required for that purpose—the voices of a policeman and the owner of the donkey. I am not taking into account the voice of our mathematical editor, as that was not loud but deep.

P. S. M.—The total cost of the food consumed by the animals of the Zoological Gardens is about £4,000 a year.

Spinster.—Cats were often kept in convents in the middle ages. Perhaps that is the origin of the traditional association of old maids and cats.

A. M. asks: "What is the origin of the superstition that crooked money brings luck?"———It comes from the Middle Ages, when, if a person became ill, he would appeal to his favourite saint to use his or her influence to bring about his restoration to health, and one or more coins were held close to the sufferer's body and bent in honour of that saint. If the person recovered, the coin was sometimes sent to the church or shrine of that particular saint, but in most cases it was retained as a charm by the restored sick one.

With reference to the paragraph which appeared on this page a few weeks back concerning the climbing perch, R. H. S. writes to say that he recently came across an account of how this fish, in India, has been known to ascend cocoanut palm trees in order to drink their milk.

RESULT OF ARTISTS' COMPETITION.

The prize of two guineas offered for the best set of decorative head pieces, corner pieces, and tail pieces has been awarded to Miss E. Woolmer, 7 Cranbourne Court, Albert Bridge, S.W.

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